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THE RAJAH'S SECOND WIFE



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The Knight's Second Wife

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THE RAJAH'S SECOND WIFE

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"ZAMBRA, ~~THE~~ DETECTIVE," "CABINET SECRETS," ETC.

WITH TWO ~~ILLUSTRATIONS~~ BY WALTER S. STACEY.

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THE RAJAH'S SECOND WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A ROYAL ALLIANCE.

AS the bows of the great steamer turned eastwards through the Straits, John Deacon leaned over the taffrail behind the wheel-house, and gazed wistfully at the fast-fading waters of the Western Ocean. Not even the grim attractions of the giant Rock availed to change his mood. He had looked upon Gibraltar before, and might yet see it many times, but never again could he hope to attain the possibilities from which those traversed leagues of

storm-tossed sea divided him. His gaze along the foaming track of the vessel was a last farewell. Before he gave himself wholly to thoughts of work and the future, he wanted to think his fill of the chance that had come to him during this furlough to England—of the chance that had come to him, and failed.

But there hovers over that corner by the Pillars of Hercules some mysterious influence which sets up for all Eastern-bound travellers a barrier between that which is behind and that which is before. Whether it is that here the scent of the sunny south is ever in the air, and that here the rough Atlantic rollers yield place to the Mediterranean ripple, I know not, but true it is that at this point those who are sick for home, and those who are sick of the sea, first

pluck up heart of grace and pull themselves together. Once round that breezy corner, even the club-haunting Indian general will cease mourning his favourite chair, and the prostrate collector's wife will emerge from her cabin—the one to talk shop and *shikar*, and the other to assert her rights of precedence at the saloon table. So it was that as the Rock dimmed into distance, and the water grew smoother at every pulse, John Deacon, whose work was neither the ruling or the slaying of men's bodies, but the saving of their souls, shook himself superior to the regrets that had held him. With a lingering look at the eddying streak in the vessel's wake, he turned to pace the deck, and plan out the future of the Jhalwa Mission—turned also, so wonderfully does God work sometimes, to face with one wild,

astonished heart-beat her whom he had been regretting as gone from his life for ever.

The weakness passed in a moment. There were passengers about in plenty, but no one noticed the undercurrent of emotion in the meeting. All that was visible to the keenest quidnunc was that "the missionary" had discovered an old acquaintance in the good-looking girl, who now, on the fifth day of the voyage, had appeared on deck for the first time. So good-looking was she that, although she had only been out of her cabin ten minutes, some of the younger male passengers had already discovered that she was booked as "Miss Forrest."

The words spoken, too, were conventional enough to call for no remark. His "What, *you* on board the *Aspasia*, Miss Forrest!"

and her "Surely it is Mr. Deacon!" gave no clue to the whirlpool that was raging in the breast of one of them; and by the time they had shaken hands the meeting was already being dismissed by the spectators as one of the ordinary coincidences of travel. So it was, in a manner of speaking, but it sprang from and led to a good deal that was not ordinary, and this was the way of it.

Twelve months before, wearied with seven years' toil in Rajputana—that roughest and stoniest of the Master's harvest-fields—John Deacon had gone to England on a well-earned furlough. He came of a good old north-country stock, and on arrival his first visit was naturally to Durham, where his father, long time dead and gone, had preached to the miners for a quarter of a

century, and where his mother still dwelt full of years and honours. The old lady had only been waiting to see her son's honest face again, and when she had heard all he had to tell of his work far away in the East, and had shed a few happy tears at the hopefulness thereof, she passed quietly to her rest a fortnight after his return.

John Deacon tarried a month or two in his native place, and then, having no near relatives to claim him, came southwards to London, where he had business with the heads of his mission. A few days in the dingy solitude of a Norfolk Street hotel were too much for one of his social temperament. After recourse to the advertising columns of a newspaper, he changed his quarters to a small private boarding-house in Bayswater, kept by Mrs. Forrest, the widow of a Church

of England clergyman, assisted by her daughter Amy. Through this simple arrangement there was ushered into John Deacon his life's romance.

Perhaps seven years' labour "up country," away from all female influence, had ripened him for his one love-affair, and yet Amy Forrest was by no means a girl of whom it would be said that he fell in love with her because she was the first woman he had met. A great many people were in the same case who had never been isolated in Indian jungles. Rather above the middle height, straight as a mast, well moulded, with a sweet, attractive face, capable of much tenderness—such was Amy Forrest at two-and-twenty, needing no excuse for the admiration she commanded. The relays of Civil Service clerks, young stockbrokers,

and medical students who took advantage of her mother's inclusive terms fell victims with unerring certainty, and it says much for her head and her heart, that all this boarding-house homage neither turned the one nor hardened the other. Not being a flirt she never laid herself out to attract admirers, and when the crisis came she let them down so gently and kindly that they could go and embosom themselves in some other "cheerful family with young and musical society" without loss of self-respect. Some even stayed on and got over it.

Not so John Deacon. When his turn came, as it did during the third month of his residence, and he plainly saw, without needing to ask, that what he wished could never be, he went straight to his hostess and intimated that he should be leaving on

the morrow. And that night one of those who had stayed and got over it, guessing from his tell-tale face what had happened, proffered the consolation customary among such creatures by hinting darkly at a previous attachment on Miss Forrest's part. John Deacon curtly told the gossip to mind his business, but not before the latter had been able to pour out a jumble of half-intelligible references to a certain Mr. Chand—then in Paris, but who lodged in the house sometimes—"One of these educated Hindoo fellows, you know; over here to study law or something, smokes cigarettes, wears dress clothes, has a box at the opera, and all that sort of thing."

But John Deacon, knowing that in India the natives are, from a marriageable point of view, as denizens of another world to

European women, and having no experience of the modern shiny-hatted type, put all this down as the vapouring of an idiot. When he went away in the morning the pangs he suffered were not those of jealousy. He was sore stricken, though, by his failure to win the girl whom he loved with all the intensity of a very earnest nature, and during the remainder of his furlough he longed for, yet dreaded, the time when a return to work would close the episode for ever. And now it bade fair, by some strange kink in the chain of events, to be re-opened again twelve hundred miles from where he had thought it dead and buried.

But almost the first words that Amy spoke showed that she was further removed from him than she had ever been in her mother's house in Bayswater. Indeed,

her manner of frank friendliness might have told him at once that she had never regarded him in the light of a suitor. After a few commonplaces, they presently sat down side by side, and she turned to him and said—

“You cannot imagine, Mr. Deacon, how glad I am to find a friend on board to whom I can talk unreservedly. I am not fond of secrets, and yet I am burdened with one which I have promised to keep throughout the voyage—from the public at least. It will be a relief to confide in one whom I can trust, and I shall be so thankful for your advice and assistance. You do not know, I suppose, that I have been married since you saw me last?”

The blow fell heavy, but he was a man, and curbed himself sufficiently to answer—

“Indeed! And is that your secret? Your husband is on board, I presume; and may I ask by what name I should call you?”

“I am going out to join my husband,” she replied; “and as to your second question, it may sound odd, but I shall have to get you to enlighten me, for I am not quite sure on the point myself.”

She spoke with a smile, as if it was a joke, but an inkling of the horrid truth, unconsciously deduced from the hints dropped by the boarding-house gossip months before, began to dawn upon him. He muttered some request for an explanation. She proceeded, in the same vein—

“In England, you see, there was no difficulty about it, and since my marriage I have always called myself Mrs. Chand;

but my aunt's husband—the only connection we have who knows anything about India—says that my proper designation is the Ranee of Jhalwa. My husband is a Hindoo nobleman, named Harichand, who has lately become Rajah of Jhalwa by the sudden deaths of his uncle and his cousin. Now, you are up in Indian matters, Mr. Deacon. How shall I be styled out there—in society, I mean?"

And he was going out to found the Jhalwa Mission! The petty native prince on whom she had sacrificed herself was the chieftain of that very stronghold of fanaticism into which he was to carry the story of the Cross! Was there ever coincidence more wonderful—or more pitiable; for how could he answer her last question—how could he tell this bright English

girl that "society," as she knew the word, was not for her; that the step she had taken in her ignorance had cut her off from her fellow-countrywomen—in India at least—for ever? And then, just as she was wondering at his slowness of reply, the true missionary instinct came to his rescue, and thrust his own troubles and those he feared for her into the shade. It flashed across him that the Amy Forrest he had known and loved would never have wed a heathen—that with a Christian ruler at Jhalwa the future of the mission would be assured. Visions of a Christian state governed by a Christian prince floated up, and it was with an eagerness that made her smile that he ignored her question, and asked—

"Your husband has embraced Chris-

tianity? He has been baptized into some Christian community?"

"Of course he must have been baptized," she said; "he never spoke of ever having been anything but a Christian. Why, we were married at All Saints', Notting Hill; and besides, almost from the first he used to attend there with me when he was staying at mother's."

John Deacon's face fell; not because he was not a member of the Establishment, and she had been married under the auspices of the Church she had been born and bred in—he was too broad-minded for that—but he was disquieted because he knew how readily an educated Hindoo, anxious to win a beautiful girl, would walk beside her to worship anywhere or anything. That was not the sort of

Christianity he wanted for Jhalwa. It was not for him, though, to instil his doubts and fears.

“Believe me,” he said, “I am deeply interested in your story, and doubly so because it happens that we shall be neighbours, for, strangely enough, I am going to Jhalwa too. Tell me some more of your husband, and how it comes about that you are alone on board.”

And after she had expressed her pleasure at finding that she was to have an old acquaintance at hand in her new home, she acceded to his request. It was a simple little narrative from her point of view. “Mr. Harichand” had been sent over by his uncle, the then Rajah of Jhalwa, to be educated in England. It was while he was studying law at the Middle Temple

that he became an inmate of Mrs. Forrest's house. Amy confessed that almost from the first an attachment had sprung up between them, which ultimately resulted in the marriage which had taken place with her mother's consent shortly after John Deacon had left. At the end of the honeymoon at Brighton news reached Harichand of the unexpected deaths of his uncle and cousin, and of his consequent succession to the *musnud* of Jhalwa. It being important that he should establish himself without delay, he had sailed for India at once, leaving his bride, unprepared as she was for an Eastern voyage, to follow later. Owing to a letter from the distant relative with the Indian experience, she had booked her passage as Miss Forrest, lest, as he gently put it, the fact of a

marriage to a Hindoo should make her unpleasantly conspicuous on the steamer.

“Though of course that’s all nonsense,” she added lightly. “People marry foreigners every day, and dear ‘Harry’”—Deacon shuddered—“is quite an Englishman in habits and thoughts, and not nearly so dark as an Italian. I only consented to sail under false colours to quiet poor mother’s nerves. She is so dreadfully anxious that what she calls my exalted position should not be divulged till it can be properly recognized.”

“I hope you will be very happy,” John Deacon said gravely, and then the dinner-gong sounded, and they went down to the saloon.

After this, as they steamed down the Mediterranean, they were much together,

and "Miss Forrest" became a favourite with the ladies on board. But the clouds were rolling up more quickly than even John Deacon's vague fears had forecasted. Any fool can prick a bubble, and it was a fool and a drunkard who pricked this one.

There was among the passengers a captain in a line regiment, named Howard Gilroy, who tried to force his attentions upon the girl, but who, being notorious as a too frequent customer at the buffet, was disliked by Amy and the other ladies in common. John Deacon took a pleasure in foiling Gilroy's efforts to thrust his company, and incurred a corresponding amount of hatred. It so happened that at Malta Captain Gilroy received a telegram from home announcing the death of an aunt, from whom he had expectations. He

made no secret of his delight, and was constantly referring to the dash his relative's money would enable him to cut. The will, however, was not yet read, but his lawyer promised that another telegram should reach him at Suez, informing him of the disposition of the property. At the latter port Amy and John Deacon were sitting on deck with a number of other passengers, when the missive was opened by Gilroy, and every one saw at a glance that the cup had failed to reach his lips. But they were unprepared for what followed. Choking with rage and hate, the disappointed man hissed out the words of the telegram—

“Every penny left to Indian Missions.”

Turning and pointing a shaking finger at John Deacon, ~~Gilroy~~ ^{he} shouted—“To the

scoundrels and sneaking hypocrites who live by robbing fools! Christianize the niggers indeed! Who ever heard of a Christian nigger that wasn't a liar and a thief? May they all everlastingly——"

"Stop!" cried Amy, starting forward. "Spare us your blasphemy, sir. You know very well that this gentleman is one of those whom you think it good taste to revile in public. You had better know too that my husband—for I am a married woman—belongs to the other class whom you are miscalling. He is a Hindoo and a Christian. I am the wife of the Rajah of Jhalwa."

She had waxed too indignant to notice that the ladies present were edging further away from her, but he whom she addressed saw it, and it was with a sneering smile that he replied—

“Wife do you call it! To my certain knowledge the present Rajah of Jhalwa was married as an infant, Hindoo fashion, twelve years ago to a child of his own caste. I was stationed there at the time. How are you going to get over that, your Highness—you and your precious missionary friend?”

The words made little impression on Amy, for she saw that he was half mad with rage and drink, but when he had gone below for brandy, she turned to address a lady who had been sitting next to her, and discovered that her neighbour had moved her chair to the other side of the deck. So had all the other ladies, and they remained so—always in a cluster, and always on the other side of the deck—till the *Aspasia* steamed into Bombay harbour.

CHAPTER II.

THE WORD OF A PRINCE.

THE ancient city of Jhalwa gleamed white in the noonday rays of an Indian sun. In the cantonment four miles away across the border, the British troops had had their early parade, and were cooling off to the best of their ability in barrack and mess-room; but in Jhalwa, which, as the native capital of a native state, is as it were to the manner born, the bazaars and public ways were full to overflowing with busy, heat-proof humanity. The hum of the teeming mass resembled the buzzing of

a gigantic hive; the sweltering air reeked with the odours of kabobs and oil.

But at the end of the street where the cloth-weavers live, to the right of the copper-sellers' quarter, there was an oasis of quiet in the midst of the turmoil, for here in an enclosure of palm-trees stands the palace of the Rajah. The use of the word had better not conjure up visions of the Taj Mahal and other all too rare specimens of Oriental architecture. The "palace," as a whole, was simply a confused cluster of white *chunam* buildings—guard-rooms, cook-houses, and the like—surrounding, except in front by the main gateway, a square, two-storied, flat-roofed stone structure having a courtyard in the centre. The windows of the central building, both those looking outwards and those

having an aspect into the courtyard, were unglazed, though rumour said that the new Rajah, having acquired perverted tastes while resident in Europe, had got some glass for the best rooms on the way. On the ground floor, running the whole length of the courtyard on the right-hand side, was the durbar, or audience-chamber—a great bare hall with a daïs at the further end, from which the rulers of Jhalwa had for centuries dispensed justice of a kind, and heard the daily petitions of their people. For the rest, the private apartments devoted to the use of the Rajah and his family were mean, not to say squalid, rooms, furnished with a mixture of real Oriental magnificence and tawdry European gimcrackery bought cheap in the auction-rooms of Bombay. The only outward and

visible sign of royalty was provided by a couple of sleepy Rajput matchlockmen in second-hand British uniforms, who were doing a slipshod imitation of sentry-go at the main gate.

In a small room over the audience-chamber two men were closeted together in private conference. Both were Hindoos, and both were richly though plainly dressed in the ordinary white garments of their race; except that the younger of the two, who was pacing up and down, wore over his other apparel, and in rather abrupt contrast to his jewelled turban, a loose smoking jacket of unmistakable Bond Street cut. This was his Highness Harichand, Rajah Sahib of Jhalwa, lately come to power in place of his uncle and infant cousin, who had been carried off by cholera

six months before. A good-looking man, with pale, olive complexion, jet-black moustache, and features of the full-faced and, if the truth must be told, sensual Eastern type, he was certainly well-favoured. His lazy eyes were perhaps a little cynically contemptuous, though every now and then they would flash out signals of other capabilities; but whether those sudden sparks portended anything of import, his reign had yet been too short to rightly determine. They had a wide range of possibilities—from the mere energy of youth up to malevolent cruelty.

The elder man, who stood by the curtained doorway in an attitude of deference, was short and stout, with a cunning twinkle in his eye that suggested an entire want of principle, relieved by a dash of droll

humour. You would have imagined that if this person ever dissembled, he would do so merely with the object of having his little joke, but you would have been wrong—because he dissembled very often, and his objects were sometimes such as made widows and orphans. This was Govindjee, the Dewan or Vizier of the State—a position which he had filled in the service of the last three Rajahs of Jhalwa.

They had been conversing for some time on public affairs, such as the making of roads, the police of the city, and the collection of taxes, the Dewan making his report on each subject in turn, and taking from the Rajah verbal instructions given so promptly and tersely as to promise able administration. At length it appeared that Govindjee had come to the end of his agenda, for he

made as though he were about to salaam and retire. The Rajah, however, stopped him with a wave of his hand.

“Give me a brief space more of your time, good Govindjee,” said Harichand, speaking of course in the vernacular. “I would fain discuss with you the arrangements in that private matter of my own of which I recently informed you. She arrives to-day.”

“I am here to receive my lord’s commands,” deferentially replied the Dewan, resuming his old attitude. “And if your Highness will forgive me, I will first mention still another small matter of public import which I had forgotten in the press of greater urgencies. I am reminded of it by my lord’s allusion; for, though having no connection with your own affair, it like

the other bears on the question of alien influence in the State."

"If it is that the Supreme Government desires to make yet another railway through my territory, I shall not raise any objection," said the Rajah.

"Would that your Highness had the opportunity of so exercising your wisdom," returned Govindjee, rolling his accents unctuously. "There is always money to be made when new railways are about—for the State Treasury, I mean," he perhaps necessarily explained. "The fire-carriage is doubtless an unholy thing, for it sometimes kills that most sacred of animals the cow; but it is nevertheless a great sprinkler of rupees, and not, therefore, unwelcome. No! the innovation I would impart to you has in it more of danger and

less of profit. It has reached my ears that a mission is about to be established in the city for the purpose of instructing the people in Christianity. Nay, it is as good as already established; two base apostates—originally Brahmins, I believe—who are to act as readers, arrived a week ago, and are living in Wadia's Gully near the horse market, while the Feringhee who is to lead them is expected daily."

Harichand ceased pacing the room, and flung himself on to a cushioned divan by the window overlooking the courtyard. He gave no sign of being perturbed by the news his minister had imparted. On the contrary, his eyes regarded Govindjee's face with a look of bored disinterest.

"Surely there is nothing so very terrible in that," he said. "I have lived amongst

Christians, you must remember, and I can assure you that they are harmless persons, and for the most part law-abiding."

The Dewan replied respectfully, but with a tinge of warmth—

"That may be so, your Highness, in the countries where they are native born—especially in England, where I have heard that they are so busy arguing among themselves about their various doctrines, that, to illustrate by the fire-carriage we were discussing but now, they blow off the steam that way and have no time for serious mischief. But in Jhalwa religious differences generally mean bloodshed. We have enough to do to keep Mahomedans and Hindoos on terms with each other as it is. Only last *Mohurrum* there was a cow riot here which threatened to end in

the sacking of the city. If we are to have Christians here, now for the first time in the history of the State, I fear that it will not tend to the popularity of your rule."

"Have there been no missions at work in Jhalwa hitherto?" asked the Rajah.

"Not of a religious nature," replied Govindjee. "A Christian Englishwoman who resides in the military cantonments at Chatra is often in the city, but her ministrations among the zenanas are only medical, I believe."

"Possibly the presence of a few Christians might divert some of the animosity now existing between Hindoos and Mahomedans," said Harichand, significantly. "The cheetahs of the jungle do not turn and rend each other when they have a common prey in view."

Govindjee's flabby features broke into a cunning grin as he grasped his master's suggestion. "Verily a wise and prudent prince is come to rule over us!" he ejaculated. "There is the essence of state-craft in your Highness's observations, and if only the more devout among our citizens can be induced to turn their resentment against the Christians, instead of against yourself for permitting the innovation, all may yet be well."

. "And mark you, Govindjee, they *must* be so induced," the Rajah took him up sharply. "I have not only the whims and fancies of my own people to study, but the good-will of the Supreme Government to retain. What would be said at Simla and Calcutta if I personally forbade or ill-treated a Feringhee Mission? Let the Christians

establish themselves within the city walls when and where they like. Surely if, as I do not deny, the presence of these persons is undesirable, a politician of your subtlety can devise some means for checking them less crude than throwing on me the responsibility of a direct prohibition. A word to the *Kotwal* (Police Minister), a hint to the *budmash* (dangerous classes), that any little rudeness towards the new-comers will not be too rigorously followed up and punished—why, there are a hundred methods of hindrance without embroiling me politically—and domestically,” he added, under his breath.

“I quite understand your Highness,” chuckled Govindjee; “it shall be made *hard* for them.”

“And now about that private matter of

my own," proceeded Harichand, speaking more rapidly. "Have the women's apartments been cleared out and prepared as I directed?"

"My lord's commands have been obeyed," replied the Dewan. "The women of the late Rajah Seetuldass's zenana left the Palace yesterday for the house which the munificence of your Highness has placed at their disposal in Churia's Pait. A month ago I instructed the chief jemadar of the household to procure some European furniture of good quality, and I noticed that it was being delivered when I arrived this morning."

"Come with me and let us look at the rooms," said Harichand, rising and going out by his private door.

Followed by Govindjee, he passed through

several dreary chambers decorated with a motley mixture of priceless Cashmere carpets, Birmingham glass chandeliers, Delhi gold work, and Christmas-number chromos in gaudy frames, till he came to the end of the suite over the great audience-chamber, and consequently to the end of that side of the house. Turning to the right, he opened a small but massive door, and entered that side of the square which was opposite to and furthest from the main gateway, thus finding himself in the portion of the palace which from time immemorial had been the home of the ladies of the reigning house. Home forsooth! Could those rooms have spoken they might have told of many a pining prisoner's anguish, of many a woman's broken heart; but to-day they were in the hands of a

Parsee furniture-broker, and were far too overwhelmed by his efforts to Europeanize them to suggest the romance of the past. The tragedy of the future was yet to come.

The wing was cut up into a series of dull, close rooms on each side of an intersecting corridor, the inner rooms looking on to the courtyard, and the outer through barred portholes on to a walled zenana garden. Half-way along the corridor there was a break in the two lines of living-rooms, forming a large apartment which had been used as a common hall, where the ladies of the Court took such sad-pleasures as were vouchsafed to them. The ground-floor below had been occupied by their attendants.

Harichand strode along the corridor till he came to the large room in the middle of

the wing. Pulling aside the drapery that veiled the entrance, he was nearly jostled by a number of coolies, who, under the superintendence of the Parsee merchant and Goculdass, the chief jemadar, were labouring under the weight of a table, which they were evidently about to place in one of the smaller side rooms. It was an old reversible billiard-table, very much the worse for twenty years' service in an up-country club, but the Parsee, having got it a bargain, thought it just the thing for a Europeanized zenana.

The Rajah's eyes flashed, though not at the incongruous nature of the trash with which the large room was littered. There being a due proportion of gilt mirrors, jangling lustres, and musical-boxes about—those *sine quâ non* of civilization in the

eyes of even the travelled Hindoo—he was willing to concede the appropriateness of horse-hair sofas and billiard dining-tables. But he was chief in Jhalwa, and did not mean to be disobeyed.

“Goculdass!” he thundered to the jemadar. “Whither are these rascals taking the table? I ordered *this* room to be prepared as a dining-room—not one of those paltry dovecotes. Govindjee”—turning to the Dewan—“my instructions were conveyed through you. I told you that I meant to use this room frequently *myself*, as a dining-room in common with the Ranee. How is it that my commands have not been complied with?”

The usually round and jovial voice of the Dewan sounded thin, as he made answer, bowing low, that he deeply regretted he

must have misunderstood. It was his own fault entirely; and even now, wrong that he was, he had some difficulty in trusting his ears. Did his Highness seriously mean to depart so far from the usages of his race as to take meat with a woman—in the zenana?

Harichand smiled, as he saw where the opposition came from, and mentally noted it, but he made no sign beyond saying—

“Tush, good Govindjee! Let the table be left in this room, and let anything that has been put into the smaller one be brought back. The Ranee is a stranger to our customs, and must be humoured—within limits. I have no intention of shutting her up here alone—so long as she behaves herself. I give you that on the word of a prince.”

CHAPTER III.

A ROYAL GREETING.

GOVINDJEE was imbued with all the prejudices of a high-caste Brahmin who had never set foot outside the confines of his own State. His face fell as he passed on the repugnant order, but he had perforce to stand by and see it obeyed. The large room was soon in process of being fitted up as a dining-room, and quickly began to assume a blended effect of Bloomsbury lodging-house and French *café chantant*. After pointing out one of the smaller chambers as suitable for a second sitting-

room, and another as a sleeping apartment, Harichand descended to the courtyard with Govindjee, who was about to return to his house in the city.

They were parting at the main gateway, when Harichand announced his intention of sending the State elephant to the railway station in the British cantonments to meet the evening train from Bombay, and bring the Ranee to the palace.

“It is not unlikely that I may go myself to fetch her Highness,” he added.

This was the last straw. Govindjee had hated the prospect of the Englishwoman from the first, but at the monstrous idea of the Rajah going himself in person on the State elephant to meet her, his soul revolted, and he flung himself at his master's feet.

"Most illustrious Prince!" he cried. "Let your slave beseech of you not to do this thing. Send the elephant if it pleases you—though that is contrary to all precedent—but go not in your own glorious person. I speak not for myself. I am thinking of the effect it would have on the common people of the bazaars. They would not understand such a departure from our customs; they would believe that you were about to desert the gods of your ancestors."

Harichand made an impatient gesture. "The fools need have no fear on that score," he said. But he had no particular wish for a dusty eight-mile ride in a howdah, nor did he desire to prove Govindjee's obedience to breaking strain, for he had need of him, and he therefore consented

to welcome his wife at the palace gate. Govindjee had to be satisfied, though nothing short of having "the woman" bundled in a closed litter into the zenana, there to be put under lock and key, would really have pleased him. He began to move away, and Harichand had already turned towards his own apartments, when the latter, checking himself, and speaking as though it were an afterthought or an effort, called after the retreating figure.

"Govindjee," he said, "since my residence here I have sometimes noticed, looking from the windows of the zenana, a comely maiden of about sixteen. She usually wears a purple *sari*, and has eyes of exceeding brightness. Have you any knowledge as to who she is?"

The Dewan stepped back briskly, and his manner showed a deferential eagerness to supply the information.

"From your Highness's description I suppose the girl to be Jadeh, the daughter of one Rati Ram, a water-carrier," he said. "She was employed as one of the attendants upon the wife of the late Rajah, and left the palace in the train of her mistress yesterday, I believe."

"I thought as much," said Harichand. "I have already engaged many servants to wait upon my wife, but her Highness will need a personal attendant of pleasing manners and experience. It seemed to me that this maiden would be likely to take her fancy. Do you think the matter could be arranged?"

"It *shall* be arranged," replied Govind-

jee; and with another deep salaam he finally departed.

No sooner was his portly back turned than a smile spread over his countenance, and he purred softly to himself like a great cat the whole length of the copper market. The train of thought culminated on the threshold of his own house, crossing which he murmured—

“In very truth it shall be arranged, for if I err not, O Jadeh, daughter of Rati Ram the water-carrier, thou hast already taken the fancy of one greater than the Feringhee woman. The wench may be useful.”

The sun had dropped behind the city wall, when the Rajah, attended by a turbaned retinue, came down to the main gate to receive his wife. The party gazed up the dusty road, where Shastra, the State

elephant, was expected to appear, together with the troop of Rajput cavalry that had been despatched as an escort. And while they yet gazed in vain they descried one of those ramshackle vehicles known as *shigrams*, which in Anglo-Indian military stations are as a shame and a disgrace even to their prototype, the four-wheel London growler. The lumbering square box drove right up to the palace gate, the half-clad driver flogging his sorry steed remorselessly, in frantic effort to justify royal patronage. For the quietly tailor-gowned young lady who stepped from the *shigram* was she who had begun her voyage on the *Aspasia* as "Miss Forrest," and finished it as the Raneé of Jhalwa.

Harichand moved rapidly forward with outstretched hand, but, to the horror of the

orthodox Hindoo courtiers, she was in his arms, and had kissed him over and over again before he quite knew what was happening.

“But what a guy you’ve made of yourself, Harry!” she exclaimed, scanning his turban and white tunic. “Why, you’ve painted your forehead too. And what on earth induced you to send an elephant for me, as though I was a circus queen? I couldn’t dream of using it; and luckily Mr. Deacon, who has been most kind on the voyage, was coming here and took charge of me. I have been trying to persuade him to stay to dinner as a reward, but he declines. Perhaps he would take it kindly if you pressed him yourself. He is in charge of a new mission here, and of course you will be glad to give him a helping hand.”

There was an ominous silence. Govindjee spat heavily on the ground, while the eyes of all were turned towards the *shigram*, whence John Deacon leaped on hearing Amy's words.

"Your Highness," he said, addressing Harichand very respectfully, and speaking in Hindoostanee so that she might not understand, "the Ranee has not had time yet to appreciate the difference in our positions, hence an invitation which is so contrary to the laws of your etiquette. I must crave your pardon for being the unintended cause of it."

Harichand bent his head haughtily, but made no reply, and John Deacon stepped quickly back into the *shigram*, lest he should compromise Amy through her wishing to take leave of him. Through the brief

episode he was calm and dignified, but when he was alone in the rickety vehicle, he buried his head in his hands, and cried in the bitterness of his soul—

“May God in His mercy help her! It is, as I feared—he wears the Brahmin caste-mark.”

And so, while John Deacon jolted onwards to the warm welcome prepared for him by the native readers at the Mission, Amy passed under the gloomy gateway to her “home.” So pleased was she to see her husband again that as yet she paid scant attention to her surroundings, and even failed to notice that Harichand was singularly reticent. She chattered to him all across the courtyard till they reached the private stairway to the zenana, where the wondering retinue salaamed and retired,

and she kept on chattering about the voyage, and the long railway journey, till they entered the desolation of the port-holed dining-room. Here the effect of the room and Harichand's monosyllables asserted themselves, and she checked her flow of talk.

"Why, Harry!" she exclaimed—in her ignorance she had always accepted the first two syllables of his name as a Christian name, and in England he had encouraged her—"why, Harry, you seem quite cross, and not a bit glad to see me. Is it because I didn't arrive on the elephant, or because I asked Mr. Deacon to dinner? I'm not going to allow you to be an old-fashioned Eastern tyrant just because you are wearing those extraordinary clothes, and have got that silly paint spot on your forehead."

A quick spasm contracted Harichand's face for a moment, but he controlled himself and replied—

“No, dear, I am not angry with you, nor do I know what you mean by an old-fashioned Eastern tyrant; but I was sorry that the preparations I had made for you did not meet with your approval. You see I am very anxious that your position should be properly recognized by my people here, and I am afraid your arrival in such humble style will not make a good impression. As to my dress, you must try and get used to it; my authority wouldn't last a week if I wore the garments of Piccadilly.”

“Oh, I can put up with a great deal for the pleasure of being with you once more,” said Amy. “I dare say I shall soon get used to Indian ways. Now show me over

the house, point out the store-room and linen closet, hand over the keys, and generally establish me as chatelaine of the castle."

Harichand looked puzzled at the to him incongruous request, and then explained that in India neither native nor European ladies busy themselves with household affairs. He would, however, show her the rooms set apart for her use at once. This was easy, for all he had to do was to pass into the corridor and open a door on each side of it.

"H'm!" murmured Amy, doubtfully, peering into the gloomy chambers; "but where are the reception-rooms and your private snuggerly, and all the rest of it? These may be all very well as far as they go, but you don't mean to tell me that this is all of the palace in use?"

“Well, no,” replied Harichand, “not exactly; but I thought these apartments would be enough for you. My own side of the palace is not interesting, nor is it half so nicely furnished in European style as this. Our ways are different from yours, and do not allow of ladies running in and out of the men’s part of the house. Of course I shall spend much of my time here, and you will soon get used to our ways.”

Amy began to feel a few qualms of doubt on that head—their “ways” seemed so very different to anything she had experience of—but, still ignorant of the extent of the plunge she had taken, she said nothing as yet, trusting to her own influence and to time to alter what she didn’t approve. And presently, when she and Harichand were seated over a cosy meal with the

lamps lighted, her spirits rose, and she talked so gaily that the solemn *khitmutghars* shuddered at her familiarity. They would have looked graver still could they have understood a word of the conversation.

When the servants had retired she reverted to the subject of the voyage, and spoke of John Deacon's kindness to her, premising that she had known him in London.

"He was at mother's when you were in Paris," she explained, in answer to a question, "and lucky it was he was on board, for without him I should have had no one to speak to. After the other lady passengers found out who I was, they became so ridiculously shy I couldn't get a word out of them, though I did all I could

to draw them out. Mr. Deacon said it was because I was an Indian Rajah's wife, but I assure you I didn't give myself any airs. Wasn't it absurd?"

. Harichand merely nodded and went on with his mango, his brows puckering.

"I dare say though," proceeded Amy, all heedless, "that I shall be able to make some nice friends among the ladies at the cantonments—what a pity they are so far off. I suppose if I give a reception or a garden-party, and get them properly introduced, they will be more at their ease, and not treat me as such an exalted being. What is the etiquette of it? I have heard that in India it is the new-comer who makes the first advances."

Livid with passion the Rajah flung the mango to the end of the room, all the

smouldering race-hatred breaking out in his wrath.

“Make advances!” he cried. “Invite the wives of British officials to meet you here or anywhere! The proud upstarts! There was truth in what that missionary man told you, but you read it the wrong way. Know then, Amy, that it was not from deference but from *contempt* that they held aloof from you on the ship—contempt because you are wedded to an Indian, one of the race they have conquered by treachery and corruption. The blood that has filtered to my veins through a line of kings makes no difference in their eyes. You, the wife of the Rajah of Jhalwa, are as much an outcast from them as though you had married the lowest sweeper in the bazaar. If you are not wise enough to

keep out of their way, they will let you know it by every insult they can heap upon your head."

The scales fell from her eyes at last, though not all.

"I see that I have made a sacrifice," she said, pale but very quiet. "All my hopes must depend on you now, for I am doubly an outcast. First you tell me that I have offended your people, because I am not dignified enough for my position, and now you say that that position is but dirt in the estimation of my own countrywomen. Harry, you must be very kind to me."

And as she put up her hand to hide a glistening tear, the curtain that veiled the entrance to the doorway was drawn aside, and a young girl of wondrous beauty stood

looking in. She wore a purple *sari*, and her eyes were full and bright.

Harichand's mood changed when he saw her.

"Come in, Jadeh," he said in Hindoostanee; then turned to Amy, and explained in English—

"This is Jadeh, a waiting-girl whom I have engaged for your service. She is pretty, is she not?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE TAIL OF THE MONKEY-GOD.

IN one sense it was a relief to John Deacon to get back to work again—and work too of such an absorbing nature that he had little time for individual cares. The founding and fostering of a new mission in the fanatical heart of a purely native city, with Brahmin priests and Mahomedan fakirs lying in wait to destroy each day's progress, is like building a sand-castle before the rising tide. It was two months before he got his first inquirer, and four before the first convert came to

baptism; but from that day he proved yet once again the paramount value in mission-work of the humblest nucleus. When swarthy Julloo, the blacksmith, a new light shining in his earnest eyes, had professed his simple faith, others followed, and by the time John Deacon made up his first half-yearly report, there were dotted about the bazaars and alleys enough cases to enable him to write hopefully.

To achieve so much, he and his two native readers had to encounter obstacles and hardships which did not figure in the report, but which were none the less real. Harichand's hint to the Dewan had not been neglected, and the loafers and *bud-mashes* knew that the sympathy of those in high places was not with the Mission. On more than one occasion the three brave

men came nigh to following Stephen's example before the stones of Moslem and Hindoo, and never till evening fell did they know how the day would end for them. Even then they often had to listen to the jeers of a howling mob outside, for Wadia's Gully was the worst and most densely populated of all Jhalwa's crowded slums.

But though John Deacon, through perils by day and perils by night, was slowly gaining vantage-ground for the cause, yet the one great task he had set himself from the first day of his entry—that of winning Harichand to Christianity—was as far from accomplishment as ever. He had reason to know that the Rajah still attended in state the festivals of the Hindoo gods; and yet, strangely enough, his failure had not been due to the entire lack of oppor-

tunity which he had anticipated, for John Deacon had not been a fortnight in the city before he was given the right of entry at the palace.

It came about in this way. On the Sunday after her arrival, Amy, bearing up bravely amid the stupendous changes in her life, found herself longing for the support of public worship, to which she had always been accustomed. She felt that, if she were in truth outside the pale of English society, yet the ministrations of her Church formed common ground whence no one had the right to thrust her; nor had she reason to doubt that her husband would wish to join her as formerly. On the subject being broached to him, Harichand excused himself from going, but assented to her attending the military

church at Chatra, provided she went in proper style. Rumour had already been busy with Amy's name in the cantonments. When she drove up to the church in one of the Rajah's carriages, amid a crowd of running footmen, the congregation was all agog to see—using the language of the mess-table—"the white woman who had married a nigger."

The language of the mess-table was to be the language of the pulpit that day. The station chaplain was a cleric who believed that the shortcomings of the heathen were specially designed by Providence to act as warnings to persons with white skins—and in a minor degree to furnish good, rousing examples, to be kept in stock by poor preachers. It never crossed the mind of the Reverend Wyndham Bulstrode to

regard a heathen as a possible proselyte with a soul of his own; all that sort of thing, he had been heard to say, was looked after by the missionaries, and it would never do for a Government servant, paid to minister to Europeans, to go about the streets cadging for converts. Possibly the chaplain, being often hard-up for subjects, was not eager for the abolition of his favourite theme—"the abandoned ways of the natives"—by means of promiscuous evangelization.

When Mr. Bulstrode, who preached extempore, saw Amy descending from the Rajah's carriage at the church door, the sight tempted him to improve the occasion, and by the time he had done with it he had improved it so far beyond all the bounds of decency and good taste, not to mention

charity, that even his admirers in the congregation shuddered, and poor Amy went home to her husband half hysterical.

“He looked straight at me,” she sobbed, “and spoke for a quarter of an hour on the wickedness of an Englishwoman marrying a native and an idolater. Just as if *you* were a Brahmin or a Mussulman, Harry !”

Harichand was honestly indignant at the chaplain's behaviour, but he saw in it a solution of the problem that had been puzzling him. Here was his opportunity to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. As with too many travelled Hindoos, his veneer of Europeanism had only availed to divorce him from the gods of his fathers without providing him with a new faith, and he was at heart an agnostic of the most careless type. He set much

store, however, by the goodwill of his people, and knew that an avoidance of their religious customs on his part, or open attendance at a Christian place of worship, would be fatal to his popularity. Otherwise he might have been willing to make an occasional sacrifice to his ease and leisure for the sake of sparing Amy the shock of finding that his London church-goings had been a pretence and a sham.

So it was that, while impressing on Amy the impossibility of her subjecting herself to further insults at the station church, he suggested that she should accept the ministrations of the new missionary in the seclusion of the palace. Feeling that she could leave a church which had so treated her without regret, she consented gladly, and John Deacon was sent for. Harichand

treated him civilly, and usually kept up appearances by attending the short service held for Amy's benefit in the gloomy dining-room on Sunday mornings ; but John Deacon quickly guessed that in the Rajah he had an infidel rather than a heathen to deal with, perceiving that the visit paid to Hindoo shrines without Amy's knowledge were tributes more to native opinion than to rooted prejudice. In the meanwhile these Sunday services were being rapidly focussed in Amy's mind as the only bright spots in her existence. Harichand never behaved other than kindly, but she craved for intercourse with her own race ; the monotonous life in the corner of the dingy palace palled upon her, and the wild, weird faces, as she drove through the bazaars, filled her with a vague yearning for friendly

glances. Her one amusement was to try to pick up the language from her constant companion Jadeh, the waiting-girl; and it was only by a loyal effort that she kept herself from moping.

So things were in Jhalwa, when one afternoon there rode over from Chatra cantonments to John Deacon's headquarters in Wadia's Gully, Miss Laura Temple, of the Zenana Medical Mission, under the escort of her constant cavalier, Lieutenant Cyprian Hammersly, of the 110th Fusiliers. Though her work lay in Jhalwa and in the villages round about, Miss Temple had her bungalow in the cantonments, because as yet the city was no fitting residence for an unprotected Englishwoman, however sacred her calling. In the daytime she came and went, mostly without let or hindrance, beloved in the

houses of rich and poor alike, though never quite secure from *budmash* insolence. Safer now, however, since close on a year before the regiment saw cause to regret and wonder at young Hammersly's defection from pigeon-shooting and tennis "to dangle about after that medical girl"—to regret it because Hammersly was the best all-round man in the battalion, and to wonder; because he took so much trouble for such scant encouragement. One of the majors said one day, "She's too full of physicking nigger women and kids to worry about men; she only tolerates that young fool because he's better company than a native *syce*." And within limits the major was right.

Since John Deacon's arrival, Miss Temple had made the Mission-house in Wadia's

Gully her house of call when visiting the city. The two had foregathered from the first, as was natural with so many identical aims and interests, and they soon had an additional bond in the sympathy which Laura Temple felt for the Rajah's English wife. So far the two women had not met, for on Amy expressing a wish to make Miss Temple's acquaintance, Harichand had looked displeased, and with a sigh she forbore to press the matter.

To-day while the "Doctor Mem Sahib" was on her rounds, Cyprian Hammersly waited in the little white-washed upper chamber, which at present did duty as church, school-house, and general sitting-room all in one. The young officer had conceived a genuine liking for John Deacon, poles asunder though they were in character

and tastes. The sight of a brave man struggling against adversity unconsciously commended the missionary to Hammersly without much heed to the cause; and John Deacon, seeing his advantage, began to use the influence so gained for the other's good. The soil was not bare for want of fertility but of cultivation, and required skilful treatment. Any attempt at preaching it into usefulness would have ended the business at once.

The two had been chatting over past experiences for upwards of an hour, when a quick step sounded on the steep stair, and the entrance of a girl wearing a pith sun-helmet and riding-habit put an end to their *tête-à-tête*. Her clever, capable face, which somehow managed to be very winning without being beautiful, was just now

clouded with an expression of grief and anxiety, and John Deacon, thinking she was worried about a patient, rose to shout down-stairs to his boy for tea. Miss Temple stopped him with a quick motion of her hand, and sat down at the end of the long table used by catechumens.

"I have something to tell you," she said; "it is very serious. Is there any one about besides ourselves who knows English?"

"No one," replied John Deacon. "Both my readers are out, though for that matter I would trust either of them with our lives."

"This has to do with what is dearer than life—to a woman," said Laura gravely. "Mr. Hammersly, I should not allow you to ride with me if I did not believe that I

could trust you, but I know how tempting a piece of fresh gossip is for the mess-table. Promise not to repeat a word of what I am going to say."

The young man was pained, and showed it.

"I will leave the room while you speak to Mr. Deacon if you do not think your request sufficient," he said, half rising.

"No, no! sit down, and don't be silly," she said; and then, after a moment's pause, continued—"Among the patients whom I have attended this afternoon was the infant granddaughter of a water-carrier named Rati Ram, who lives in Pathan Khan's Alley, near the great well, with three or four generations of his kin. The child is hopelessly ill with pulmonary phthisis and will die, but that is not our present concern.

Rati Ram's house is a tumble-down, rabbit-warren place, and the women's part, in which I saw my patient, overhangs a small enclosure at the back, in one corner of which is a kind of annex used as the family shrine. A ragged red flag flutters from the roof, and I have seen the hideous faces of the idols through the doorless entrance. To-day, while the mother had gone to the bazaar for some seeds for a poultice, I waited alone with the child, and suddenly I heard the sound of slip-shod native footsteps in the enclosure. Looking through the wretched window-slit, I saw two pairs of shoes—one of fine scarlet leather, and the other pair common and dirty—left at the entrance to the shrine. It was too dark in the interior to see more than the flutter of white garments, but I was near enough to hear voices

talking in Hindoostanee. The first voice said—

“ ‘And now, O Rati Ram, we will hear this confession of thine, and take heed that thou art careful in the rendering of it. Stay, it will add force to thy words if they have the sanction of the heavenly ones. See, here is the image of the great grey ape, whom, together with Ganesh and Siva, thy fathers worshipped. Swear then by the tail of Hanuman the Monkey-god, that thy words may be received with honour.’

“The second voice began rather falteringly, but seemed to gather confidence as it proceeded—

“ ‘I, Rati Ram, the water-carrier, make this statement, and swear, thus touching the tail of dread Hanuman, to the truth thereof. It is now ten years since my sister was

tiring-woman to Seeta, wife of the Thakore of Dhoonghar, to whose infant daughter Luxmeebhai, Harichand, now Rajah of Jhalwa, was wed in their childhood. When Luxmeebhai came to be six years of age, my sister, being harshly treated and struck by her mistress, did plot revenge. My little daughter Jadeh being at that time sick to death, my sister did change the children, they being alike in feature and in form, bringing Luxmeebhai to my house, and taking Jadeh my daughter, then on the point of death, to the palace of Dhoonghar. Thus when Jadeh died it was thought to be Luxmeebhai, and, the wife of the Thakore grieving much, my sister was avenged; whereas Luxmeebhai in truth grew and prospered under my roof, forgetting that she was the daughter and wife of a prince,

and in course of time taking service as a handmaiden in the palace, where she ought to be held in honour. These are my words, and I have spoken freely in the hope of pardon, my sister, who is now dead, being chiefly to blame.'

" ' Good ! O Rati Ram,' the second voice said. ' So shalt thou bear witness when thou art called upon. Till then keep silence, lest a worse fate befall thee.'

"The voices ceased, and immediately afterwards two men came out of the shrine and went out through the house. One was the water-carrier, and the other was a sleek, well-dressed man, whom I recognized at once as Govindjee, the Dewan. You see, of course, what this leads to—if it is true and can be proved ? "

John Deacon sat with his face bowed in

his hands, but Hammersly, not rightly comprehending, put a question.

“It means,” said Laura Temple, “that that poor girl at the palace, who thinks herself Ranee, is neither maid, wife, nor widow.”

CHAPTER V.

COUNSEL'S OPINION.

CYPRIAN HAMMERSLY broke the silence which followed Laura Temple's words by dashing his fist indignantly upon the table.

"Surely this fellow Harichand can be punished for bringing an Englishwoman to such a pass!" he exclaimed. "He is only a tributary prince, and therefore liable to the laws of the Supreme Government. There must be *some* protection for our countrywomen against such cruel hard lines."

"To punish the Rajah would be no
G

consolation to this poor girl," said Miss Temple. "As to protection, Englishwomen would best seek that beforehand by learning a little more about the Europeanized Indians they meet in London. It is only the gross ignorance of Eastern manners and customs that prevails at home among the middle classes which makes these mixed matches possible. What is your opinion of the Ranee's position, Mr. Deacon?"

He rose, and went to a desk in the corner of the room, from which he took a paper and returned to them. The other two noticed that his feet dragged wearily, as though he were in physical pain.

"I tried to provide for this emergency months ago," he said. "A half-drunken man on board ship, in the presence of—we had better call her the Ranee, alluded to

a previous child-marriage on Harichand's part. Seeing the condition of our informant, we attached little importance to his words, and I have no doubt that if she has mentioned the matter at all, Harichand has satisfied her with the story of his infant wife's death. I myself, on coming here, was lulled into security by learning the supposed fact of Luxmeebhaj's death, but till then I felt uneasy; and when I landed at Bombay I wrote home for the advice of an old schoolfellow, who is fast making his way at the Bar as a specialist in Indian appeals. I put to him an imaginary case as to the Ranee's position, supposing the infant wife mentioned by the drunken man still existed. My friend's reply reached me by return mail. Dating from Essex Court, Temple, he writes—

“ ‘MY DEAR JOHN,

“ ‘I sincerely trust that the case on which you want an opinion is really only a supposititious one, for on the facts given I can see no legality, either under English or Hindoo law, in the second marriage of the Hindoo to the Englishwoman. Let us call the Hindoo A, the first (native) wife B, and the Englishwoman C. According to the Indian law, A's apostasy from Hindooism to Christianity would not dissolve his union with B; this point having been decided in Ram Kamari's case, I. L. R. 18, Cal. 264. Further, the Hindoo marriage would be held good in English law notwithstanding the conversion, permanent or temporary, of the man to Christianity. Consequently the second marriage is void by reason of the first.

“ ‘ Monogamy is a part of the law of Christianity, and is an unalterable part of the status of every Englishman ; but by Hindoo law polygamy and bigamy are permissible. As A had apostatized, however, at the time of his second marriage, Hindoo law would not apply, and he would be considered guilty of bigamy under the English law, and also under section 494 of the Indian Penal Code.

“ ‘ To sum up, the Englishwoman has no claim on the Hindoo, for her marriage is not recognized either in England or India. She could initiate proceedings under section 494 of the Indian Penal Code, when, on proof, A could be sent to prison for a term which may extend to seven years, besides being liable to a fine. That is undoubtedly the law upon the facts you have

furnished, but, as I said before, I sincerely trust that they exist only in your imagination.—Yours very truly,

“ ‘ARTHUR MORRISON.’ ”

“Then Miss Temple’s definition of the Ranee’s status is right,” said Hammersly; “and what is worse, this wretch Harichand has just sneaked out of our power to make it hot for him. He can’t be prosecuted for bigamy, because he can prove that he had every reason to believe that Luxmēebhai was dead.”

“It is not our place to be vindictive,” said John Deacon, with reproof in his tone. “The Rajah has not led her into this wittingly; his greatest sin was his pretence of Christianity in London in order to gain his ends. That I have been working hard

to rectify by bringing him really into the fold."

"I'd take him by the scruff of the neck and bring him there if it would do the poor lady any good," said the young officer, boyishly effusive, "but it doesn't seem to matter a rap now, saving your presence, whether the beggar is a Christian or not—unless," he added as an afterthought, "this is all a conspiracy, and the Rancee is legally married to him after all. Supposing the Rajah, being, as we know, unscrupulous, is scheming to get rid of his wife because he has taken a fancy to this girl Jadeh? supposing Rati Ram's confession is inspired by him?"

"That too I have considered," said John Deacon, "and I am convinced that it is not so. I have had many opportunities

of seeing them together, and I will vouch for it that, whatever his faults may be, Harichand is as fond of his English wife as ever—aye, and faithful to her too. I have often seen the girl Jadeh in their presence. Both of them regard her as an engaging and graceful domestic, that is all. I am not without hopes of winning Jadeh from heathendom.”

Laura Temple had sat with undisguised impatience throughout Hammersly's well-meant if impracticable suggestions, flicking the table with her riding-whip, and attempting, on this occasion ineffectually, to practise the art of ruthless snubbing to which she systematically treated the young man. His persistence, however, drove her to abandon dumb show in favour of active interference.

"I am quite sure you will do the right thing, Mr. Deacon," she said. "but I should dearly like to know if your view of what is right agrees with mine."

John Deacon's answer was to rise and take down from its peg the great pith sun-helmet which was already a familiar object in the streets of Jhalwa.

"I am going to the palace to have it out with Harichand," he said, smiling the smile that made him so many friends. "If anything underhand is going on he ought to be put upon his guard. When I see his attitude I shall be guided to the next step."

"I was not mistaken in you, Mr. Deacon," replied Laura; "that is exactly what I should have proposed. And the Ranee—shall you tell her?"

"If anything transpires to prove or even

tend to the truth of the water-carrier's confession, it will be my duty as a Christian minister to prevent her occupying such a position for another hour," was the reply. "But as long as there is reasonable doubt I would not inflict this horror upon her—it might be needlessly."

"Again I agree," said Laura, proceeding, according to her wont, to salve the silenced lieutenant's wounds by adding—"And don't mind mentioning the source of your information. With Mr. Hammersly for escort I am quite equal to braving Govindjee's wrath. We will wait here till you return."

But before John Deacon reached the doorway, his departure was retarded by the pid-padding of bare footsteps on the stairs, followed by the entrance of a stalwart

figure, clad only in turban and *cummerbund*, whose finely-proportioned limbs suggested a bronze statue quickened into life. The new-comer's eyes lit up with a cheery smile as they rested on John Deacon, and the missionary's hand was clasped in a pair of grimy paws that for sinew and muscle would have done no discredit to a Tyneside coal-heaver. It was easy to see that the man knew he was among friends. He salaamed pleasantly to Miss Temple and Hammersly, and then squatted down on the bare floor with expectation written large on his dusky countenance. This was Julloo the blacksmith, nicknamed by John Deacon "the Pride of the Mission," for was he not the first-fruits of his toil in Jhalwa, and his most trusty friend?

"I have come to hear the good talk,

Sahib," he began. "I remember all you told me last time, but I want more, more, plenty more—so that I may get wisdom to speak of these things to my people. I should have been here sooner, but I was caught in a crowd which had assembled to see the Thakore of Dhoonghar pass through the streets to the palace. He is but now gone thither, together with Govindjee the Dewan, who has with him one Rati Ram, a water-carrier of the great well. Peradventure this man has committed a crime against the Thakore, for which the Dewan is about to obtain redress from Harichand."

The three Europeans looked one at the other significantly, and John Deacon put his hand kindly on the convert's head.

"I am called away for a brief space, Julloo," he said, "but I may return shortly.

Tarry here awhile with your good friend the Doctor Mem Sahib. She can speak the good talk as well as I can, for what is she but a missionary in disguise ? ”

And then, without waiting for a reply, he sped down the murky stairs and out into the crowded streets, jostled here and scowled at there, but running all the way to the palace, as he had never run since his football days at Loretto years before. Turning into the cloth-weavers' street, he caught a glimpse of Amy in the Rajah's florid barouche starting for her afternoon drive, and it was a relief to know that she would be away. The matchlockmen on duty at the main gate knew the “ Missionary Sahib ” as a privileged visitor, and with wonder in their sleepy eyes attempted a clumsy salute, as he dashed passed them into

the courtyard, only to halt at the Rajah's private door.

Goculdass, the chief jemadar, came forward from a group of waiting servitors. "His Highness is engaged with the Thakore of Dhoonghar and Govindjee the Dewan," he said, in answer to John Deacon's inquiry. "I would recommend that the Sahib should wait a little."

"My business will not brook of delay; it is connected with the Thakore's visit," replied John Deacon boldly, and he pressed onward up the stairs, heedless of the jemadar's muttered protest.

At the top he came to an ante-room, which was separated by a curtain from the room in which we first saw Harichand conferring with the Dewan. Pausing on the threshold to recover his breath, and

still screened by the curtain, he heard a strange voice, which, from his knowledge of the facts, he presumed to be that of the Thakore of Dhoonghar.

“Proof?” it was saying; “I am assured that proof is forthcoming. My little daughter, to whom your Highness was wed with so great pomp, wore a golden bangle which she had outgrown, so that it could not be removed. The child who died at my house most assuredly had on the bangle at the time of her death, for well do I remember the funeral rites when the body was burned with the ornament still on her wrist. But—and here is the proof that Luxmeebhai yet lives—this rascal water-carrier asserts that the gewgaw was removed at his sister’s instance by an artificer of the city, and refixed upon the wrist of the dying Jadeh.”

Govindjee's oily tones struck in—

“Give heed, O Rati Ram ; what is the name of this artificer who changed the bangle, as thou sayest, from the healthy to the dying girl ? ”

And a faltering voice replied—

“ Being but a poor man, your Highness—a blind, crawling thing who only lives by my lord's permission—I do not rightly remember. But mayhap I can ascertain. Perchance the women of my family will be able to assist my feeble memory.”

At this point John Deacon stepped boldly into the room. The Rajah was sitting in an arm-chair, having at his side an obese old native; whose bediamonded turban proclaimed him to be of rank. Before them stood Govindjee the Dewan, sleek and self-possessed, and not so perturbed by the

entrance of his *bête-noir*, as to remove for more than a second the watchful eye with which he seemed to hold in thrall every motion of the grovelling water-carrier. Somewhat to John Deacon's surprise, Harichand received him courteously, almost eagerly, beckoning him forward.

"Come in, Mr. Deacon," he said in English. "I am glad to see you, for the smattering of law I picked up during my studies has taught me the value of a friendly witness. This man Rati Ram has brought to the Dewan, and now to me, a story which if true would wreck the Ranee's happiness and mine. I cannot and will not believe it. Listen to the reply I make to these people;" and turning to Govindjee and his would-be father-in-law he said very firmly, changing into the vernacular—

“I have hearkened patiently, as behoves me in a matter so nearly affecting my good friend and vassal the Thakore of Dhoonghar, but with what has my patience been rewarded! With nothing but the unsupported words of a *budmash* water-carrier, who by his own showing is a liar and a rogue. Here is my answer. I refuse to accept that story; I forbid any reference to it, public or private, till the artificer who changed the bangle can be produced. That, I am convinced, is an impossibility, and till it is accomplished, Govindjee, you will have this ~~man~~ Rati Ram detained in the city jail. Summon the palace *chowkedars*, and away with him to the Kotwal!”

Rati Ram began to squirm and wriggle, half opening his mouth in protest; but one glance from Govindjee, shot straight into

his eyes, had the effect of quieting him. The palace guards appeared, and he was led away, sullenly unresistant.

The Dewan himself followed, but not before he had said, obsequiously—

“I trust that my lord acquits me of all blame in the unfortunate matter. The vile wretch brought his story to me, and I was bound to lay it before your Highness and the Thakore without delay.”

Harichand merely nodded. He was busy taking leave of his former father-in-law—a needy nobleman, whose disappointment at the non-restoration of family relations with his feudal chief was plainly visible, and who was only deterred from openly demanding Jadeh to be sent for and acknowledged by the remembrance of certain loans from the State Treasury. He was

evidently pinning his faith to the finding of the artificer who had changed the bangle.

When he had shambled off in Govindjee's wake, Harichand bade John Deacon sit down beside him, and with greater friendliness than hitherto told him the story which was already known to him. John Deacon was glad that events now enabled him to be silent as to this previous knowledge, for if conspiracy was abroad Laura Temple might be made to suffer for repeating what she had overheard. Harichand's view of the case was that it was a scheme on the part of Rati Ram to get a reward from the Thakore, and his one anxiety was that the matter should be jealously kept from Amy. John Deacon, while tacitly differing as to the source of the confession,

felt that, in the absence of proof, he could conscientiously approve the course proposed.

It was not till the sun was setting that he finally quitted the palace, with a better opinion of Harichand than he had ever had before. So late was it that he expected to find Julloo still waiting for his "good talk," but that Miss Temple and Hammersly had returned to the cantonments. The reverse, however, was the case. The lieutenant and Laura were chatting in the darkening Mission-room to one of the native readers, but Julloo was gone.

"He was sent for in haste about half-an-hour ago, to go to the house of Govindjee the Dewan," Miss Temple explained. "His little son ran over to fetch him."

Was Julloo "the artificer of the city"?

CHAPTER VI.

“THE PRIDE OF THE MISSION.”

THE next day was Sunday, and John Deacon proceeded as usual to the palace to hold the weekly service in the zenana. Harichand was present, and there were signs of a hopeful change in his demeanour. The Rajah's usual air of bored indifference had given place to earnest attention, which, though obviously critical rather than devout, was an improvement on yawning apathy. He followed the missionary's short address closely, and instead of retiring to his own apartments the moment the service was

over, remained while John Deacon spoke those words of private comfort and consolation by which Amy set so much store. Harichand's manner was more considerately kind to his wife this morning; his mood was softer; and, as he afterwards strolled to the palace gate with John Deacon, he even put one or two halting questions which half implied a wish to believe.

“ You Christians—real Christians, I mean—seem so happily confident in all your difficulties that it makes an outsider like myself a little envious sometimes,” he said as they were parting.

“ That happiness and confidence are open to you, sir, this very day, if you would but put forth your hand and take them,” was the reply. “ But you must remember that

there can be neither without genuine belief. Forms and ceremonies, however openly practised, would of themselves avail you nothing."

"I am afraid that a belief into which one had persuaded one's self from selfish motives would avail equally little," said Harichand.

"And I answer you that that matters not one jot," said John Deacon eagerly. "Belief is belief, and no matter why you persuade yourself, or are persuaded into it, if it is thorough, you will end by doing for Christ's sake what you began by doing for your own. Any belief short of that is not worth the name."

"I will think of these things and speak to you of them again," replied Harichand, as he turned back through the gateway;

and John Deacon, hurrying to the Mission for his wider work, was comforted with the thought that yesterday's episode might be turned to good account after all. It almost seemed as though the Rajah had been startled from careless self-dependence into a knowledge of his own helplessness.

With his mind more at ease about affairs at the palace, John Deacon was able to throw himself heart and soul into the Mission service that morning. It was his practice to devote Sunday wholly to public worship for converts, the work of gaining proselytes being carried on on week-days. The upper chamber in Wadia's Gully was crowded almost to its full capacity of thirty persons. Every missionary who has rightly gauged the quick appreciation of allegory

by the imaginative Eastern mind, has cause to thank God daily for the beautiful parables of the New Testament ; and, with the events of the morning fresh upon him, John Deacon preached from the text of the grain of mustard seed a sermon which was more than half a prayer that Harichand's seedling might ripen into the Kingdom of God. Coming to practical illustration, he impressed on his hearers their bounden duty of spreading and fostering the grace that had been vouchsafed to them, so that in Jhalwa there might spring from the blessed seed not single trees, but a whole glorious forest. He spoke the language perfectly, and he was always eloquent, but to-day he felt his subject glowing within him ; and when the little band of native Christians filed from the dingy doorway into the street,

the jeering mob outside was struck dumb for a moment by their looks of firm resolve. And he whose burning words had reached their hearts, knew not for a little while that that morning’s sermon had for himself still greater issue—even the issue of life and death.

When John Deacon raised his head after a few moments’ silent prayer, he saw that Julloo, the blacksmith, had remained behind the others, and was waiting to speak to him privately. He was glad of this, for he thought that Julloo might disclose whether the summons to the Dewan’s house on the previous day had any sinister meaning. But the blacksmith’s first words reassured him on that head. John Deacon knew that Julloo, if any communication threatening the Christian Ranee’s position had been

made to him, would be sure to report it ; but he did not even allude to his visit to Govindjee's house. It appeared that he was exercised in his mind about the discourse to which he had just been listening, and wished for further enlightenment.

“ Sahib says that ever so little a seed thrown down may grow into the Kingdom of God,” he began. “ How long does it take before the seed shows through the ground ? ”

“ It depends a little on the quality of the seed, Julloo,” replied John Deacon, “ and a very great deal on the nature of the soil. There is no certain rule.”

“ Then if I throw down a seed in a man's heart, and it does not burst through at once, I need not give up as no use,” persisted Julloo. “ Perhaps my seed is

poor stuff; perhaps the man's heart is hard; but my seed come up all right in the end?"

"Yes, Julloo," replied John Deacon, "it would be quite wrong to give up hope because the seed did not sprout at once. Why, you cannot have forgotten that in your own case the seed was under the soil for many weeks before it appeared. You must watch closely for the first sign, and pray unceasingly that it may take root and prosper."

"One question more, Sahib, and I have done. I have a narrow strip of garden ground on the banks of the nullah, beyond the Ajmeer Gate. When I have sown my seeds therein I have not done with them. Now of late, since you speak the good talk, I pray for their welfare, it is true: but I do

more than that ; I get water and sprinkle them ; I hoe up the weeds ; I tend the soil. Is it the same with the hearts of men ; must I keep on watering and tending, or only watch and pray ? ”

What else could John Deacon do but wring the blacksmith's sinewy hand, and with thanks to God for the garnering of this true follower, bid him go forth and tend and water the human garden that was his care, just as he would the rice patch by the nullah side ? And the point that had puzzled him thus cleared up, Julloo tightened his *cammerbund* and departed, salaaming and happy, to act on the advice that had been given him — advice of which the eventualities were in mercy veiled from both those well-knit souls.

Once or twice during the next day or two

John Deacon saw Julloo and questioned him as to the progress of his proselytizing, but the blacksmith, though by no means despondent, was fain to confess that the seed had not yet appeared above ground. The missionary was under the impression that he was striving to influence one of his neighbours in the bazaar, and forbore to press for details, feeling sure that when ready the inquirer would be brought to him.

Human forecasts, however well founded, don't amount to much. Towards the middle of the week, John Deacon, returning to the Mission after a morning in the leather-sellers' quarter, felt a gentle pluck at his coat-tail just as he turned into Wadia's Gully. Looking round, he found himself confronted by Julloo's first-born—a dusky

nine-year-old atom of nudity, who was so out of breath with running that an evident intention to cry was for the moment impracticable. When the tears and the wails did come, they were both so copious that John Deacon had to take the child into the Mission-house and soothe him before he could get at the cause of his distress. Having got at it he was fain to weep himself, for Julloo had been arrested as a thief.

All that was known by the boy, who was a messenger from his mother, was that Julloo had gone at dawn to the house of Govindjee the Dewan, where he was engaged on some work; that about noon a neighbour had brought word that the Dewan himself had handed Julloo over to the officials of the Kotwal on the charge of

stealing a ring, which, rumour said, had been found concealed in the blacksmith's turban; that he was to be tried at the Kotwal's court on the following day, and that, being unable to explain his possession of the ring, he would assuredly be convicted. Julloo's wife, who, though a convert, was as yet not very clear as to the whole duty of a Christian pastor, was anxious that the "Missionary Sahib" should cast a spell over, or otherwise force into confession, the wicked demon who had placed the ring in her innocent husband's turban.

John Deacon promised to attend at the Kotwal's court on the morrow, and sent the boy away with such comfort as was possible. He felt pretty sure in his own mind that the demon he was called on to exorcise was no less a person than Govindjee

himself, whose hatred of the Christians would stop at nothing. He was convinced that Julloo was no thief, and he came to this conclusion on no grounds of sentimental partisanship. He had enough of the canny north-country man in him to be able to appraise the value of profession, and full well he knew that one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to missionary enterprise in India lies in the self-interested motives of far too many converts. But that bug-bear chiefly obtains in the mixed native and European communities of military stations—not in purely native cities such as Jhalwa, where the convert has more to lose than gain.

And then the man himself! Though of humble birth and without education, there had been so much bright intelligence in his

first inquiries, later such unfeigned scorn for the idols of his ancestors, and now so firmly rooted a desire to stand by, and with God’s help spread the faith which permeated his whole being, that John Deacon pronounced in his favour without hesitation. How or why this cruel charge had been vamped up it was impossible to say; and still more difficult was it, under native administration, to devise means of extricating him from the consequences of a crime all the more heinous if no greater than in some way to have crossed the darksome path of Govindjee.

The Kotwal of Jhalwa, Narayen Futteelall by name, was an official who combined the function of police commandant with those of city magistrate. At his court were tried all the smaller criminal cases and breaches

of the peace which were not deemed worthy of being brought before the Rajah personally. The power of deciding which cases should or should not be tried by the Kotwal was virtually in the hands of the Dewan, and as the former official held his appointment more or less by favour of the latter, a prisoner charged by Govindjee would be likely to fare ill. In the event of conviction there was a right of appeal to the Rajah, but it was seldom exercised, because the appeal had to pass through the Dewan's hands. The criminals of the city knew a shorter cut to freedom than that, which was not to get convicted at all. This was a comparatively easy matter for those who could afford to swell a snug little private fund which constituted the police-court a very close borough for Govindjee and the Kotwal.

John Deacon took his place early next day among the limited number of spectators for whom there was panting-space in the foul-smelling annex of the city jail which served as a justice-room. Narayen Futteelall, a crafty-eyed, cruel-visaged Brahmin, was punctually in attendance, squatting cross-legged on a very dirty sofa, and spitting betel-juice to the right and left without regard to aim. After acquitting a wealthy tradesman of the spice market, who ought to have been convicted on the clearest of evidence of selling by false weight, he ordered Julloo to be brought before him. The blacksmith was led in bound between the two *chowkedars*, and almost at the same moment Govindjee shambled in, and making his way through the salaaming audience took his seat at the Kotwal's side.

With just enough righteous indignation to ruffle his usual sleekness he began to state the facts of the alleged robbery. The accused, he said, had been employed lately at his house to repair window-gratings, and on the previous day had been working in his, Govindjee's, private room, where he himself was busy writing up reports for the Rajah. The better to manipulate his pen, he had removed from his finger a valuable gold ring, laying it on the table at his side. He was called away for a short time, and on returning missed the ring. Knowing that no one else had been in the room, though Julloo protested that he had not seen the ring, he caused the prisoner to be searched, when it was found concealed in a fold of his turban.

The Kotwal turned his codfish eyes on

Julloo and asked him, not whether he was guilty or no, but what devil had got hold of him that he should thus basely steal the ring of his benefactor and most illustrious lord the Dewan.

And Julloo, standing upright between his guards, looked his accusers full in the face and made answer—

“I am a poor man, and not worthy to put my word against the word of my lord the Dewan. But I did not lay hands on the ring, nor had I knowledge that it was in my turban. My trust is in a Higher than Govindjee—even the great God of the Christians, whom I serve. He will establish my innocence in His own time. Till then, O Kotwal, do with me as it seemeth good to thee.”

John Deacon, though rejoicing that his

friend should stand there and profess Christ, knew that if there had been a chance before it was ruined now. That became quickly apparent. Govindjee had caught sight of the missionary, and, with an evil smile, whispered a few words to the Kotwal, who not only sentenced Julloo to prison for eight hundred days, but launched into a torrent of abuse against Christian converts generally.

“They are time-servers, thieves, and drunkards, worthy only to herd with swine, and be defiled by dogs. They lie to the fools who lead them astray, and thief from the faithful servants of Vishnu, Ganesh, and Siva,” concluded Narayen, hoping that his peroration was strong enough to earn his prompter’s approval.

It earned him more than that, and some-

thing that he had never got before in the course of his judicial experience—a public rebuke. John Deacon could not sit quiet under the slander on his flock. With difficulty controlling himself, he exclaimed—

“You have no right to say that. While living in the State of Jhalwa I desire to respect its authorities ; but I cannot do so when unfounded charges are made against a whole sect which already numbers some of the most upright men in the city. I wonder that you dare to make such a sweeping accusation against a religion to which his Highness the Rajah’s wife belongs. As to this man’s conviction, let me tell you that I no more believe him guilty than I do that he has had a fair trial.”

Long before he ceased Govindjee's fat lips had again sought the Kotwal's ear, and John Deacon thought that, in his hatred of the Christians, the Dewan was going to the length of ordering a British subject to prison. But he was mistaken; open warfare was not Govindjee's method, and he saw that they had gone too far. The Kotwal, with a courteous wave of his hand, remarked that the Sahib had misunderstood him. He had only meant to refer to persons of bad character, not to Christians as a body. Doubtless there were *budmashes* in all creeds. With regard to the conviction just recorded, the Sahib was, of course, entitled to his opinions, but on a question of judicature no interference could be permitted.

Disarmed, though not convinced, John

Deacon had to be content, and stood by powerless while Julloo, smiling back at his friend, was hustled out of sight. The proceedings having no further interest for him, John Deacon, sick at heart, was turning to leave the squalid court, when his attention was taken by a posse of *chowkedars*, who were half carrying, half leading a man to the judgment-seat. One of them had a black bottle in his hand, and the new prisoner was weeping shrilly, like an hysterical woman. A Chinaman and two or three dissipated-looking natives followed. A second glance told John Deacon that the rags which scarcely covered the wretched creature were the tattered remnants of European clothing, and that his skin ought to have been white. "Then a straggling sun-ray came through a window slit, fall-

ing full on the bloated, sodden face, and disclosing the features of Howard Gilroy, the foul-mouthed passenger of the *Aspasia*.

CHAPTER VII.

“EUROPE GIN.”

WHEN an Englishman comes to grief socially and financially in India, let him, if he values his body and his soul, clear out of the country without a day's delay. Should he have friends, the kindest thing they can do for him is to pay his passage home, and see that he goes; if not, the wisest thing he can do for himself, is to work his way round the Cape, or through the Canal, by the very next vessel that is short of a hand. To hesitate is to be lost in an abyss of degradation of which you,

who only know the tramp at home, can form no idea.

Up and down the length and breadth of the land, the European "loafer" is to be found, mostly in the great cities—not, thank God, in numbers that affect the census, but making up for numerical deficiency by the abjectness of his condition. While the Viceroy in Council is planning to uphold prestige by the chastisement of yet another frontier tribe, he forgets that, right in the heart of the Empire, this silent enemy is doing more harm to the British name than the little wars of a century can correct. They have ways, these European vagrants, which in nearly all cases present a marked similarity. When the fall is first accomplished, as long as clothes preserve a semblance of decency, they will hang about

military stations and prey on their own race, sponging here for food, there for brandy, and always for a few rupees to take them further on their aimless way. But there comes a time, and that quickly, in the history of every loafer, when for very shame at the terror of his own countenance, he can no longer stand in the presence of his countrymen, even to beg. Then he slinks quietly away to the slums of a city, where he hides his nakedness and his misery in opium dens and arrack shops, seen of natives only, and living, till the end comes, on such scraps as are flung to him by Moslem or Hindoo, in consideration of a change in his religion. When Tommy Atkins deserts the colours, he is sure to be caught if he remains in the country, and, knowing this, he makes for the sea. So that to ninety-nine out of

every hundred of these poor derelicts the fall has been all the greater, because in that other life, which is to them now but an opium dream, they were accounted gentlemen.

Howard Gilroy's downfall had been rapid and complete. For years he had been forestalling the legacy of which he had been disappointed by the last act of a long-suffering relative, whom he had alternately neglected and deceived. His aunt's eyes being opened to his true character shortly before her death, by an application for money on his behalf from a discreditable quarter, she altered the disposition of her property so that it might benefit and not harm her fellow-creatures. The end of Gilroy's military career would probably have been the same in any case, but the

loss of the expected windfall undoubtedly hastened it. When he reached the headquarters of his regiment at Agra, the baniahs, or native money-lenders, in whose hands he was, quickly got scent of his position, and finding that the expectations on which they had made advances did not exist, began to press their claims. Failing payment, they commenced proceedings in the courts, and as in India a debtor must either pay or go to jail, Gilroy was confronted with the alternatives of flight or imprisonment. He chose the former, and in a month's time, having spent his last rupee, found himself stranded at Ajmeer, a penniless outcast. From that day the brand of the loafer was on him, nor did he make an effort to efface it. In less than six months he had become the thing that was

hauled before the Kotwal of Jhalwa charged with stealing a bottle of "Europe gin" in a Chinaman's opium den.

John Deacon at once altered his mind, and decided to remain in court. He imagined that Govindjee, who had not yet withdrawn, was in just the mood to prompt his subordinate to unwarrantable harshness towards a European delinquent thus cast into his clutches. The Dewan's flabby cheeks were again creased in that evil smile, and once more his lips were glued to the Kotwal's ear. It would be as well for a fellow-countryman to be present during the trial, so that in the event of excessive punishment or total miscarriage of justice, some word of the affair might reach the Supreme Government. In the improbable event of acquittal, too, some one ought to be there

to at least hold out the reclaiming hand, which, experience told, was well-nigh certain to be indignantly rejected.

The prosecutor was a half-caste Portuguese cook, who had been discharged for dishonesty—as like as not stealing that very gin bottle—from a regimental mess in the cantonments. These matters of ancient history, however, were not necessary to his case, and Mr. de Souza discreetly confined his narrative to his undoubted possession of the black bottle when he visited Ah Chung's opium resort on the previous night. It is a common practice with the slaves of the poppy to smoke and drink by turns during a debauch, and they generally bring their own liquor—a fact which the prosecutor put forward unblushingly as a simple detail. He had placed the bottle under his

head before "going off." When he awoke, the proprietor, with the politeness due to a regular customer, informed him that he had seen the *budmash* Sahib transfer the bottle to his own pillow, where it was found in the presence of many witnesses.

Ah Chung gave his testimony in broken Hindoostanee, and several customers corroborated. It had been evident to John Deacon from the first that Gilroy had no defence, and that if he had, he was in no condition to put it forward. Clad in a filthy pair of duck trousers tied at the waist with string, a ragged *kharkee* shooting-jacket, and boots that scarce clung to his stockingless feet, while the witnesses were giving evidence he alternated between maudlin tears and virulent abuse in English and bad Hindoostanee.

The Kotwal put his usual question—
“What devil prompted you to do this thing?”

“Why shouldn’t I take the stuff?” whined Gilroy. “Of course I took it. Why else did I enter a place of entertainment? I can give you a cheque on my bankers in London for the amount, if you will give me pen and paper. I am an officer and a gentleman—a Sahib—and you black beaks on the bench ought to be down here cleaning my boots. A gentleman must have his liquor.” And he began to quaver out the chorus of a drinking song; then started in horror from an imaginary reptile on his threadbare sleeve, and fell to weeping again.

But at the mention of writing materials a sudden idea seemed to have struck

Govindjee. Yet again he whispered briefly but imperatively to the Kotwal.

The latter nodded, then asked aloud—

“Is aught known of this man?”

“He arrived in the city ten days since, and has lived on the charity of the people, sleeping in a cow-byre at the back of the Fazil Khan Musjid,” said the chief chowkedar. “When money is given him he spends it either on arrack or in the opium shop of Ah Chung the Chinaman.”

The saturnine Kotwal's manner changed like lightning from judicial curiosity to judicial rage.

“Then if the man is in the habit of paying for his entertainment, why in the name of Siva bring him before me?” he shouted. “That is his own statement; it agrees with my judgment,

and now we have it from the mouth of an independent witness. You China rascal, and you scum of Goa, I am minded to send you both to the chowk for bringing a false accusation. Get you gone from my sight ere it is too late. The prisoner is discharged."

Before the dazed wretch could realize what had happened to him, up rose Govindjee, twinkling maliciously at John Deacon.

"The Missionary Sahib supposed just now that we were moved by animosity against Christians," he said. "I am therefore glad of an opportunity to prove to the contrary. This unfortunate gentleman is doubtless a Christian—perhaps a type; who knows? Well, I, Govindjee, the Dewan of Jhalwa and a Brahmin of the Brahmins,

do charge myself with his welfare. In my house he shall be a guest. I will provide him with food and with money, aye, and with Europe gin to his heart's desire, so shall it not be flung in our teeth that we of the city are less charitable to Christians than they to us."

Gilroy, following the direction of Govindjee's sneering gaze, saw John Deacon and recognized him. Dulled though they were, his senses were always prone to evil, and he grasped the situation at once. With a horrid grin he replied—

"Oh yes; I'm a Christian right enough. I half promised old Jaffer Khan in the horse-market last night to go Mahomedan for a couple of water-melons and a kabob. Your offer is a better one, Mr. Baboo Whoever-you-are, and I'm glued to Chris-

tianity just as long as your hospitality holds out. When shall I come?"

"I will conduct you to my dwelling without delay," replied Govindjee.

Stepping down from the daïs, he passed out of court with Gilroy at his heels, much to the wonderment of the multitude, who never before had beheld the Dewan's spotless robes in contrast with the rags of a loafer.

John Deacon followed into the open air, glad to be quit of the reeking atmosphere, but much down-hearted by the events of the morning. The mock justice meted out to Julloo saddened him scarcely less than the degradation of Gilroy, whose advent to the city and protection by the Dewan boded no good to the prospects of the Mission. The only reason assignable

to Govindjee's conduct was, that he meant to keep the wretched being in a constant state of debauch, and parade him before the indiscriminating populace as a sample of Christianity to the injury of the cause.

The days that followed, however, were not wholly black; in one sense they were the calmest and happiest in John Deacon's ministry at Jhalwa, for not till afterwards was he to know that they were but the prelude to the storm. Much as he missed Julloo's cheery face and childlike zeal from the mission-room, he was greatly compensated by events at the palace. The danger that had loomed up so darkly seemed to have dispersed without falling. Rati Ram was still in the city jail, being presumably unable to name the artificer who had changed the bangle; and, best of all,

Harichand remained in the more thoughtful mood which had followed the water-carrier's confession.

John Deacon was much at the palace during these days, for Harichand, in place of tolerating him, now courted his society, and took delight in putting questions which all pointed one way. From scoffing unbelief the Rajah had passed to the more hopeful regions of honest doubt. And as the doubt was based on nothing more solid than the stale old arguments of cheap infidelity, John Deacon felt that here was no unassailable fortress, but that with its commandant already inclined to parley, surrender would be only a question of time.

In the meanwhile Amy's lot improved as by magic with her husband's changed demeanour. He devoted more time to her,

accompanied her in her drives, and especially pleased her by wearing English clothes within the precincts of the palace. The Brahmin caste-mark, the real purport of which had been concealed from her, he only wore in public. A horde of chattering coolies were busy laying out a tennis-court in the zenana garden, and a steam launch had been ordered from England to ply on the river. Harichand frequently expressed the intention of gradually accustoming his people to seeing their prince leading the healthy life of an English country gentleman, a purpose in which John Deacon warmly encouraged him. Twice of late he had neglected to attend important festivals of the Hindoo gods.

But being ignorant that this last was a new departure, the concession which

meant more to Amy than all the rest was the permission graciously and spontaneously accorded to receive Laura Temple. And one day, seeing Cyprian Hammersly waiting in the courtyard while Laura and Amy, fast becoming friends, were in the weird dining-room discussing Medical Mission projects, Harichand literally astonished the natives by courteously inviting him to join them at tea in the zenana. Cyprian was a little starched towards his host at first, but when he saw the Rajah's deferential and plainly unfeigned devotion to Amy he unbent, and thenceforward spoke of the Rajah as "a good sort." Harichand in turn took a genuine liking to Hammersly, and used to lament the rare occasions when military duty deprived Miss Temple of the young officer's escort. In fact, it appeared

as though the suspicion of treachery on the part of his own people had not only instilled serious thoughts, but had caused him to turn with loathing from native to European society.

Govindjee was more obsequious than ever, and laid himself out to be indispensable to his master by relieving him as much as possible from State cares. He gave no sign of disapproval of the new influences, and even went out of his way to assist them, for he it was who suggested that Harichand should give a tiger shoot for Hammersly's benefit, and it was at his instigation that a double shift of coolies was put on to finish the tennis-court before the rains. Even to John Deacon when he met him in the streets the Dewan was genially polite, and only the by-

standers noticed that he spat with increasing fervour after he had passed by. From the loafer Gilroy no public scandal had emanated; if he was still an inmate of Govindjee's great rambling house, his entertainment was conducted entirely within doors; he was never seen about the streets, and the opium dens and liquor shops knew him no more. And the Mission grew in strength and numbers, and there was talk of a church and a school-house being built on some waste land beyond the palace.

So it was when one afternoon, six weeks after the scene in the Kotwal's court, John Deacon was with the Rajah in the room which served as the latter's study and private audience-chamber. From the usual theological arguments they had drifted to

general matters, and so friendly was Harichand that John Deacon had almost decided to broach the subject of Julloo's imprisonment. Many a time he had had it in his mind to speak a word for the blacksmith, but knowing the Rajah's jealousy of interference in State affairs, he had been waiting for a favourable opportunity. Thinking it had now come, he had opened his mouth to make the attempt, when the rumble of carriage wheels sounded in the courtyard, and Harichand looking out announced Amy's return from a drive. It was evident that Julloo's cause would have to wait till another day, for in his eagerness to join his wife the Rajah was already half-way out of the room, beckoning John Deacon to follow.

The two made their way to the zenana

end of the courtyard, where the carriage had drawn up. Amy was on the point of alighting, while Jadh, resplendent in purple *sari* and beaming with smiles, stood ready in the doorway to receive her mistress. Harichand pressed forward to give his wife his hand, and it was this action that first showed them that something was wrong. For just a moment Amy hesitated as though about to place her hand on her husband's arm, then drew back and stepped quickly to the ground unaided. Her face was ashy pale, and her eyes had the stony look of one who needed the relief of tears.

Harichand was all anxiety.

"You are ill, I fear? The sun has been too much for you," he exclaimed, following her over the threshold.

"I want to speak to you, and to you,

Mr. Deacon," she replied, without turning her head, and so walked on up the stairs to the dining-room.

The moment the two men were in the room she confronted them, still strangely pale, and said with a curious metallic tone in her voice—

"A boy threw this into the carriage as I was passing through the bazaar. What does it mean?"

As she spoke she handed a dirty piece of folded paper to Harichand. Upon it were the following words in English, written in shaky characters—

"To Miss Forrest, otherwise known as the Ranee of Jhalwa.

"It is only fair that some one should inform you that you are probably living in

what your friend the missionary would call *sin*. There is a grave doubt whether the Rajah's first wife is really dead. Hari-chand knows all about it; so does Deacon. They are keeping it from you. Ask them *both*, for though the Rajah might lie I don't think the parson would.

“ A FRIEND.”

CHAPTER VIII.

BEHIND BARS.

THE veins in Harichand's forehead stood out like knotted cords as he read the infamous letter, but he said no word while John Deacon, to whom he passed it instinctively, was mastering the tremulous scrawl. Amy stood motionless, watching their faces with eyes in which despair was deepening quickly. An exclamation of surprise at the nature of the allegation, or a hot denial of connivance at concealment, might have reassured her, but the grieved and angry silence informed her that the doubt hinted



"A boy threw this into the carriage
The Rajah's Second Wife.

What does it mean

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at *did* exist, and that was all she was concerned to know.

“It is true then?” she said, when John Deacon had read to the end.

“No, no, no! A thousand times no!” exclaimed Harichand, misapprehending. “It is but the vile fabrication of a scoundrel, who is unable to sustain it by an atom of proof. He is now in prison for his pains, and I am still sufficiently master of my own State to answer for it that his life shall pay the penalty.”

“You mistake,” said Amy; “I mean it is true that the legality of my marriage has been questioned. It is true that both of you, whose duty it was to apprise me at once, have kept this to yourselves.”

“Listen to me, Amy, and let me speak for Mr. Deacon as well,” said Harichand.

“There is absolutely no proof. We both came to the conclusion that the statement was put forward for the sole purpose of extortion or fraud. Except in the minds of one or two interested persons, there has never been the shadow of a doubt as to the lawfulness of our marriage. Why then should Mr. Deacon and I go out of our way to destroy your peace by retailing a story which has not a single element of truth? It would have been too preposterous,” and he went on to tell her the whole of the details of Rati Ram’s confession, suppressing nothing but the fact that the alleged Luxmeebhai was in her service as Jadch, the waiting-maid. “There,” he concluded, “you see what a palpable imposture the whole thing is. If there had been one grain of truth in it, the man who changed the bangle

would have been produced long ago. The fact that Rati Ram took the story to the Thakore in ignorance of the bangle, and being therefore unprepared with a spurious 'artificer,' left the flaw in his wretched piece of villainy which enabled us to pass it by without a second thought. There is absolutely no proof."

"But it has not been *disproved*," said Amy. "That is why I cannot understand that you should deprive me of freedom of action by concealment. At you especially, Mr. Deacon, I am surprised. I should have thought that as a minister of religion you would have been the first to see that till this story is cleared up my position here is impossible."

"I have no desire to defend myself if I deserve your rebuke," said John Deacon.

"It was only after I had satisfied myself that the confession was a palpable fraud that I consented to take this course."

"And who are you to be satisfied?" cried Amy. "Am not I—weak woman though I be—the best judge of what will satisfy my own honour? Do you think I would have remained an hour under this roof with such degradation threatening me? Rather would I have gone on foot to the cantonment to throw myself on the charity of strangers. Since then God has provided me with a friend, and to Laura Temple's friendship will I appeal, even though by doing so I forfeit all that I have—even my husband's love."

As she spoke she made a motion towards the door leading to the stairs, and simultaneously Harichand, his eyes flashing

ominously at her intention, took two steps to bar her egress. The entrance at the other end of the room merely led into the corridor, this part of which was entirely blocked by the barrier door separating the zenana from the Rajah's apartments, so that any attempt to leave the palace in that direction would have been futile.

The group at that moment made a strange picture, if only from the utter incongruity of its details. The Rajah had been engaged on State business earlier in the day, and being therefore dressed in full native garb of jewelled turban, flowing tunic, and scarlet vest, formed a striking contrast to the graceful figure of the English girl, in her pretty gown and becoming hat. But in the respective attitudes of the two, and in that of John Deacon, would have lain

the chief incomprehensibility of the scene to European eyes. An indignant desire to depart marked every line of Amy's pose, while Harichand's gliding limbs and lowering brow meant forcible prevention as plain as words could speak. Yet the Englishman's hand of protest was upraised not at the Hindoo but at his fellow-countrywoman.

From no lack of sympathy though. His heart yearned to free her from all trouble; but he was a peacemaker by profession, and he knew too well that Amy herself had given Harichand the right to detain her if he chose. John Deacon's raised hand was no endorsement of Harichand's conduct, any more than it implied disapproval of Amy's impulse; but he wanted to make one last effort to stop a needless breach before it had widened beyond repair.

“Will you let me say one word?” he interposed; “and believe me that if I have erred in this matter, it has not been from lack of friendship to either. On that friendship I presume to advise only—not to dictate or interfere.” Turning to Amy he continued, “It is my earnest conviction that there is no reason why you should hesitate, in the absence of a shadow of proof, to remain here. You both entered into the marriage state believing it to be perfectly lawful, and nothing that has transpired tends to the contrary. I give this opinion to you as to a Christian woman who respects God’s ordinances, just as I would give it to my own sister had I one so circumstanced.”

Harichand, still guarding the doorway, shot a grateful glance at him, while Amy

also, who had stayed her steps, regarded him not unkindly.

“I am willing to credit you with upright motives,” she said; “but let me put it another way. If you are entitled to your opinions, am not I, who have most at stake, entitled to mine? Supposing my conscience tells me that there is a doubt, and that till that doubt is cleared away it would be wrong on my part to remain here—would you advise me to fly in the face of conscience, and take the chance of committing grievous sin, because it is the easiest and most pleasant way? Advise me on that basis, please, Mr. Deacon—not on your own opinion, which, after all, may be fallible.”

The answer came without hesitation—

“I would advise no one to act against

conscience ; if you cannot be persuaded that the water-carrier's confession is obviously false, I agree that it would be morally right for you to take the course you propose."

Amy turned impetuously to Harichand.

"After that you must let me pass," she cried. "I shall go to Miss Temple, and remain with her till you bring me the certain proof I require."

But the Rajah did not move from his vantage ground. It was evident that a painful struggle was going on in his mind—a struggle between the inherited Orientalism which regards all women as chattels, and his own natural chivalry which prompted him to yield. In deciding the issue his great love for Amy counted for nothing, inasmuch as it swayed him equally

both ways: *having* the power he would keep her with him because he loved her; *though* he had the power he would let her go because he loved her. It was a contest between the two opposing forces of good and evil strangely dominated by the same influence; and it is not hard to guess which won, when the good was, after all, but flabby human sentiment unbacked by grace divine.

“No!” he said at length; “I cannot let you pass—till you give me your pledge to stay with me.”

“I am a prisoner, then?” exclaimed Amy, bursting into tears.

“Of your own making,” retorted Harichand. “Do you not think it grieves me to have to treat you thus? But I shall maintain my rights,” he added hotly.

“Whatever may be the law in England, here in Jhalwa a husband has the power to control his wife’s person; what greater cause could he have than a threat to leave him? As for you, Mr. Deacon, seeing that you pit the Ranee’s conscience against my authority, I cannot permit you to visit her for the present. I will see you to the gate.”

The Rajah motioned impatiently to John Deacon that he should leave, and the latter, seeing that his presence was likely to do more harm than good, wrung Amy’s hand and passed out of the room. Harichand followed down to the courtyard, and sent one of the attendants, who were clustered as usual at the foot of the zenana stairs, to summon the chief jemadar.

“Goculdass,” he said, when the man

appeared, "we are going back to ancient rules and ways. This is a zenana; let it be treated as such. This outer door is to be kept barred,—do you understand?—and no one except myself and the Ranee's female servants is to pass in or out. Place two trusty men on guard, and see that my orders are obeyed."

"It is my lord's will," assented the jemadar, bending double.

"There is no other door except the one into my apartments and that into the walled garden at the back?"

"There is none other, Light of my eyes. Not so much as a mongoose could escape or enter without my lord's commands."

"Tis well," replied Harichand; and he followed John Deacon into the courtyard, while the great iron-bound door that had

stood open since Amy's arrival swung to with a ~~clang~~.

Before they had gone many paces two gigantic Nubians, relics of "the ancient rules and ways," had appeared as by magic to resume their old occupation as janitors of the zenana door, and there was joy among the jabbering horde of servitors because the Feringhee woman was to be put in her place at last.

The Rajah and John Deacon walked side by side towards the main gateway. Hari-chand was the first to break silence.

"I am not going to quarrel with you because you have partly backed her up in this folly," he said. "Come and see me as often as you like, but do not expect admission to the Ranee till she comes to her senses. You had better notify Miss Temple

that this applies to her also. And remember," he added, smiling sadly, "if I am Oriental enough to shut my wife up, I am sufficiently a European not to be a brute to her."

"I hope so," said John Deacon gravely; "but would to God your Highness had found those higher motives which have filled her with this uneasiness. Then you would respect hers, and there would be no talk of bolts and bars."

"This is not one of our theological discussions," replied Harichand dryly. "I am simply applying one of my own national customs to a train of circumstances that requires it. If you are going to twist religion into it I won't listen to you; if you can offer a practical suggestion for putting an end to the deadlock, I will give you the

best site in Jhalwa, and build you a church upon it myself."

"If you would promise to attend the church, I might be tempted to accept your bribe," said John Deacon; "but you shall have the suggestion in any case. Does it not strike you that the anonymous letter might come from the same source as Rati Ram's confession?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Harichand. "The man is in prison. The water-carrier could not write his own language; how then could he write in English? There are probably only three people in Jhalwa who can. Two of them are here, and the Ranee is the other. No, I have been suspecting some of those venomous women at the cantonments—one of the class who avoided her on board ship."

“You forget that, even were they so base, they know nothing of Rati Ram’s confession—Miss Temple said as much. I believe that the letter was written in Jhalwa, and that it is part and parcel of a conspiracy to separate you from your wife.”

“It has failed then,” said Harichand grimly; “but tell me your reasons.”

“Govindjee the Dewan is at the bottom of at least to-day’s mischief,” was the rejoinder, which came as a veritable surprise to the Rajah.

And clearly and succinctly John Deacon went on to say how Govindjee had befriended the English loafer for no apparent cause, which cause now stood revealed in his desire to get some person to write an English note, he being shrewd enough to

know that Amy would not willingly remain in Jhalwa in what might turn out to be unlawful wedlock.

“Whether or no he was behind the water-carrier’s confession I cannot say,” concluded John Deacon. “I have thought so sometimes, but against this idea, I must tell you that Miss Temple happened to be in Rati Ram’s house, and heard the confession made. However that may be, I know that the Dewan would have rejoiced in the success of a scheme which would have put all Christian influence away from the palace. As that scheme, if scheme it was, failed of its original intention, I think it probable he determined to turn it to the same purpose in this later fashion.”

They were approaching the main gate, and Harichand tarried, leaning against one

of the interior pillars that supported the central arch. He regarded John Deacon thoughtfully before answering, then said—

“Your suggestion is too weighty, my friend. I cannot bring myself to accept it. Govindjee was a faithful servant to my uncle and to my uncle's father. It is true he hates Christians, but I cannot think he would risk so much—power, office, everything—to gain so little.”

As he spoke the matchlockmen outside suddenly made one of their laborious efforts at a European salute. A flutter of white garments appeared at the end of the vista of the archway, and the portly form of the Dewan loomed into view from the outside world. Harichand stood upright, his eyes sparkling.

“Here comes the man himself,” he con-

tinued, lowering his tone ; “ I will put him to the test. I shall tell him something which will be a disappointment if your theory is correct, but which otherwise will please him. Watch how he receives my information.”

“ Govindjee,” said Harichand, as the Dewan drew near, salaaming deeply, “ I know your devotion to old-established ways. Your heart will leap to hear that in future the Rance is to be treated according to the fashion of Hindoo wives. Her Highness is in the zenana, *and will stay there.*”

Just one quiver of the fat eyelids, and then a beaming smile spread itself over the Dewan’s broad features, for all the world, as the Rajah said afterwards, like the full moon rising over the *maidan*.

“ Heaven-born Ruler !” exclaimed Go-

vindjee, his unctuous voice shaking with real emotion, "it was the one thing needed. Thy reign shall be written among the stars as the reign of the Prince who governed Jhalwa with firmness and himself with wisdom !"

And he stood there chuckling and crooning like one who has heard news well-nigh too good to be true.

CHAPTER IX.

TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL.

AFTER Govindjee's reception of the news of Amy's restraint in the zenana, John Deacon saw at once that it would be useless to attempt to persuade the Rajah of the Dewan's guile. As was perhaps natural from the method of his education, there was a good deal of personal vanity in Harichand's character, and he was so pleased with his own shrewdness in devising the "test," that to hint that he had been deceived by a wiler than himself would have been to give him dire offence. In his

clinging hope that he might yet be able to smooth Amy's path, John Deacon felt the necessity of keeping on terms with Harichand at all hazards; and for the latter's own sake he would not lightly do anything which might imperil the half-completed conversion of so important a proselyte. Moreover, if Govindjee had dissembled, he had done it so completely as to considerably shake the suspicion of his accuser, for on Harichand casually questioning him about the English loafer whom he had befriended, he produced sufficiently convincing evidence of his guest's departure from the city three days after the trial.

With the closing of the grim zenana gateway on its captive, dark days set in at the palace at Jhalwa. Harichand seldom mentioned Amy, except to answer briefly

John Deacon's questions as to her health; but once, being boldly pressed as to her state of mind, he made the admission—"She is very wretched;" and added, not without pathos, "and so in truth am I." That was the nearest approach to weakening that he ever showed, and when John Deacon essayed on the strength of it to reopen the subject of his conduct, the attempt was curtly repressed. The Rajah stuck to his preconceived idea of the origin of the anonymous letter, and for a time to that of Rati Ram's unaided authorship of the confession; though later he began to suspect his former father-in-law, the Thakore of Dhoonghar, of complicity. John Deacon had no certain knowledge, but he feared much that Harichand was meditating torture as a means of extracting a confession

of conspiracy from the water-carrier, and his heart misgave him, because he knew that Amy would never be satisfied with "proof" so obtained.

In the meanwhile, every half-hour that he could snatch from the greatly increased work of the Mission, he spent in labouring to that end by which alone he knew that Harichand's heart could be changed from stone to clay. From the first he had felt that Amy could have no safe or lasting happiness in Jhalwa, even as the Rajah's honoured wife, unless her husband abandoned his dalliance with two creeds, and his practice of neither, for unfeigned faith in Christ. There had been times before Harichand had deigned to discuss religion, when John Deacon had almost wished that he were a downright believer in the

“strange gods” of his fathers, rather than deceive his wife and his people by a contemptuous observance of the rites dear to both. But now in Harichand’s Christianity he saw not alone hope in the future for the man himself, for Amy, and for his beloved flock in Jhalwa, but the only sure medium by which the prisoner in those gloomy chambers at the end of the courtyard could be released. And whether it was in answer to many earnest prayers, or through the working of the Spirit, or through both, I may guess but I cannot say ; yet true it is—and as strange as true—that during those dark days, sullenly for the most part, and sometimes with virulence of argument, Harichand nevertheless listened to John Deacon with an interest that still left room for hope.

Once only was John Deacon's intimacy with him endangered, and that was when, at an apparently favourable moment, he tried to plead the cause of Julloo. So angered was the Rajah at what he considered a slight on his administration, that he was inaccessible for two days, and when at last he consented to see John Deacon again, he told him plainly that he would tolerate no further efforts to shake the Dewan in his estimation. So the Sunday services and week-day classes at the Mission were still without the blacksmith's merry face, and John Deacon never passed the city jail without shuddering, as stories of the pestilence, filth, and misery in native State prisons recurred to him. One of his daily prayers was that Julloo, if he survived the ordeal, might come out with his

faith unshaken by the injustice of his earthly oppressor.

The affairs of the Mission weighed heavily on John Deacon at this time, because of the approach of the *Doorga Pooja*—the great Hindoo religious festival, when, under the pretence of worship, the followers of Brahma hold high carnival for several days. Especially is this the fête of the Hindoo princes, for at this season they go forth publicly to honour the gods amid the full state of gilded canopies, official elephants, and pluming yaks'-tails, and accompanied by such a collection of troops as they can muster. In Jhalwa there was usually the additional excitement of a collision between the Mahomedan and Hindoo *budmashes*, who made the festival the occasion of settling their

religious differences in more or less blood-thirsty street-fights, repaying with interest the blows exchanged at the Mahomedan ceremony of the *Mohurrum*. John Deacon feared the effect of the turmoil on some of his younger converts, and worked day and night among them, lest the inducement to return to old heathen customs should be too strong. And again, the *Pooja* might mark an epoch at the palace, for Harichand was halting between two opinions—whether or no to personally patronize the mummeries of his people; and John Deacon hoped against hope that he would be able to stablish his dawning faith in time to make the abstention a certainty.

One day John Deacon sat in the mission-room alone, having just dismissed a class of adult candidates for baptism, which in

turn had followed a Bible-reading with older members. He was weary, and the burden of the flesh was heavy on him, for he had sat up into the small hours in the fetid atmosphere of a hovel on the outskirts of the city, where an aged Hindoo woman — an “inquirer” — lay squalidly dying with only half her dark old mind made up. He was debating whether to go back to her straight, now that the morning’s classes were over, or to turn into the palace for an hour’s chat with Harichand, and so save his fevered head from the noon-day sun before taking the longer walk. What he really needed was sleep, but he never spared himself when souls were at stake, and he only hesitated because above all else he dared not break down.

Suddenly the cus-cus tatty that veiled

the entrance was thrust aside, and Laura Temple came in. The moment John Deacon set eyes on her he knew that something had happened—nay more, he knew by one quick spasm of prescient foreboding that something was about to happen to himself. He had felt all day as if some mysterious influence were hovering round him, and now there was that in the medical missionary's face which told him, as clearly as though she had already spoken, that her tidings would bring the fulfilment of his presentiment.

“Hush!” she said, waving him back as he rose to meet her, “you can see that it is serious. I will come there as far from the door as possible.” As she made her way up the long room John Deacon noticed that she was very pale, but that her nerves

were steady, and her presence of mind unshaken. Not till she was at his side, and then only under her breath, did she cast her bombshell, whispering in his ear—

“There is a plot to murder the Rajah! It is to be done on the first day of the *Doorga Pooja*—if he is not present at the ceremonies. It is for you to warn him of his danger.”

“One moment,” John Deacon said, and going to the window he looked up and down the gully. There were only a few pot-bellied babies rolling in the dust, and a couple of pariah dogs snarling over some offal. In the main thoroughfare at the end the motley crowds were passing to and fro, but save for the children and the dogs, the denizens of the gully were in their

houses over the midday meal. There were no eavesdroppers in sight.

Returning to her, he said briefly, "Yes?" It was no case for waste of words.

"I was sent for to the palace," she resumed in the same undertone. "Jadeh, the maid who waits on our poor friend, was taken ill in the night, and I found the girl suffering from a serious attack of typhoid. She had already been isolated by the Rajah's orders, in a small room on the lower floor of the zenana wing, and I was conducted there on the understanding that I made no attempt to go up to the Ranee's apartments. I saw at once that the patient was dangerously ill, and told her so in the hope of getting her to obey instructions. Having done all I could for her, I was coming away, when she called me back and said,

that if she were going to die she had something to tell me. Bad as her story is, I believe that the girl is simply wicked through ignorance, and that if you had not influenced her this secret would never have been told.

“Of course Govindjee is behind the mischief, and, thank God, this time, if the girl’s life is only spared, there is clear evidence of his guilt. It came out bit by bit. Jadeh has a sweetheart named Mana, who is Harichand’s own table-servant. She has been commissioned by Govindjee, under promise of bribes for herself and her lover, to work upon this young man so that he may consent to put poison in his master’s food on the evening of the *Doorga Pooja*, in the event of the Rajah absenting himself from the festival. Harichand

always takes his meals in his own apartments now. The Dewan, though outwardly complaisant, is at his wits' end to keep Harichand from Christianity, and has devised this last desperate measure in view of the rumour that the *Doorga* will be the occasion of his final renunciation of idolatry. Jadeh has not yet imparted to Mana what is expected of him, but she thinks—and so do I—that Govindjee, on hearing of her illness, is certain either to approach Mana through another medium or to find a substitute. I discovered that Jadeh knows nothing of Rati Ram's confession, or of her own alleged identity with Luxmeebhai. I have put her in charge of one of my trained native nurses, but before I admitted the woman, I impressed it on Jadeh to tell no one of the

proposed crime, lest those implicated should escape.

“On leaving her I sent word to Hari-chand by one of the courtyard attendants that I wished to speak to him on a matter of urgent importance, but I suppose he thought I wanted to persuade him to let me see his wife. He returned a polite message that he regretted he could not see me, but that you would inform him of anything I might have to say. It rests with you to warn him at once. I leave the matter entirely in your hands, and shall tell no one, for truly in India the walls have ears. I am even glad that Mr. Hammersly need not know. He is not with me to-day, being detained on duty at the barracks. You will go at once?”

“I was on the point of going when you

came in," said John Deacon, moistening his lips from a beaker that stood on the table. "Did Jadeh say how—how her mistress is?"

Laura Temple—good woman—understood his anxiety and pitied him. Having heard that he and Amy had known each other in London, she had long ago guessed his secret, and honoured him the more for his conscientious performance of duty in face of the disturbing coincidence that had brought him to Jhalwa.

"I fear there is no good news," she answered gently. "She cries a good deal, Jadeh said, and passes much of her time in the walled garden, always secretly watched. She refuses to see Harichand, and it is one point in his favour that he does not force himself upon her."

“It is terrible,” he murmured, half audibly, more to himself than to her.

“I must be going now,” Laura said; adding kindly, “Take care of yourself, Mr. Deacon, you are looking far from well. I wish you could have been spared an additional trial at this crisis, but there was no one else to trust to, was there?”

He smiled sadly for reply, and wrung her hand. Five minutes after the cus-cus tatty had dropped behind her he was standing exactly where she had left him—at the far end of the room, close to the rude desk that served him for a pulpit on the Sabbath. He was staring straight down the room to the door, never, in his pre-occupation, having shifted his gaze since he had watched his departing visitor. Through the window, throbbing on the

sweltering air, came the thousand sounds of the great human hive outside—the cries of street sellers, the howling of the old fakir at the end of the gully, the cheerful “Chel ! chel !” of the bullock-drivers, the babble of a vast multitude—but they had no separate meaning for him then. He did not even heed the buzzing they made in his ears. He saw nothing but, with his mental vision, the figure of a woman weeping in a walled garden, and heard nothing but a voice which seemed to speak to him from within.

The woman wept on, and the voice said—“Do not be in a hurry to rush off to the palace to warn the Rajah. Take time for consideration. It is very probable that the knowledge of this plot against his life would undo all your work. He is weak,

and values popularity. This feeling, and his natural fear, would almost certainly cause him to revert to the open practice of idolatry from which you have so nearly weaned him."

Still the woman wept. After a pause the voice went on—"It would be better a hundred times for Harichand to die in the Lord than to live a secret infidel and a professed idolater. What is a man's life so that he save his soul alive?"

The woman continued to weep, but now she stretched out her hands in mute appeal. The voice proceeded—"And surely the hand of Providence is visible in this. What other chance is there for Amy to be relieved of her dreadful load? Even if Harichand lived a Christian there could be no happiness for her—no release from her

self-imposed imprisonment—with the unsolved and apparently unsolvable mystery threatening her marriage. She would pine away and die, friendless and forlorn, in that grim zenana. But with Harichand dead—happily dead in Christ, mind you—her troubles would be at once ended, and who knows but that after a time——” Here the voice became thick and blurred. When it grew audible again it was saying—“Of course these would only be *consequences* of your action—not *reasons* for it. Your reason for not warning Harichand of his earthly danger would be to save him from a far greater spiritual one. It is your paramount duty as a Christian minister to win his soul to Christ.”

The voice ceased, and after a little while the vision of the weeping woman faded.

It was half-an-hour since Laura Temple half left the Mission. John Deacon passed his hand over his eyes like one dazed, and taking his sun-helmet went down into the street. When he reached the main thoroughfare he stopped for a minute, and then with a long shuddering sigh went on again. But the route he took was not that which led to the palace. His steps turned to the hovel of the dying "inquirer" with whom he had sat up the night before.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROPHET AND THE COW.

THE house of Govindjee the Dewan stood in a narrow street leading from the copper-sellers' quarter to the cloth bazaar. It was of mean exterior, bearing no proportion in the part that was visible from without to the extensive premises within; for the house not only ran back a considerable distance, but occupied a goodly space at the rear of the smaller houses fronting the street to the right and left. No one would have supposed that the unpretending gateway set in the short strip of blind

wall formed the approach to the residence of the Rajah's prime minister.

If Govindjee's light was hidden under a bushel it was generally burning brightly enough within. For more than a quarter of a century Jhalwa had been virtually ruled from that retiring abode, and the schemes that had been laid and hatched there, if recorded, would have made a very comprehensive secret history of the State. Even had he been that way inclined, its busy owner would have had but little time for domestic life, but to one of his views and temperament it was a relief to be without it. Women-kind of many generations and relationships he had depending on him, but they were all stowed away securely in a dungeon-like zenana. He had not looked on his own wife's face for years, and

it is even possible that he had forgotten whether she was yet alive.

On the same day on which Laura Temple brought her news to the Mission Govindjee returned home from his daily visit to the palace, looking less sleek and composed than usual. Those who saw him accounted for his gravity by the near approach of the *Doorga Pooja*, and his consequent anxiety as to the behaviour of the rival factions. He went straight to the room where he transacted business—the one in which he had charged Julloo with stealing his ring. Giving orders that he was on no account to be disturbed, he removed his turban, and sitting cross-legged on a pile of carpets chewed betel-nut for the best part of an hour. Then, soothed and comforted, he replaced his turban, and despatched

a messenger for the chief of his household.

The man—a tall, stealthy-looking Hindoo of low caste—quickly appeared.

“How is it, O Jeswunt, with the Feringhee swine whom I have permitted to wallow under my roof?” said Govindjee. “Is he sober to-day, or has the Europe liquor, procured at so great cost, stolen away what little brains are left to him?”

“So please my lord,” replied the head servant, “the low creature is improved somewhat in condition since he came here. By my lord’s commands I have doled his supply out to him plentifully, but at regular intervals, so that he may be always under the influence and yet never quite helpless. He begins to feel his restraint, in thy servant’s humble judgment, and will soon

give trouble unless permitted to go abroad in the streets."

"'Tis well, Jeswunt," said Govindjee; "you have managed admirably, as you always do in these delicate matters. It is possible that his wish to go out may be gratified. * No one but yourself knows of his presence here?"

"No one, my lord," was the reply. "When he stole back by my lord's desire in the dead of night after his pretended departure, I alone received him, and conducted him to his present quarters. There I only have attended him ever since. 'Tis well that thy servant is of low caste, or he could not have taken meat and drink to this vile Feringhee."

"No matter, good Jeswunt," said Govindjee; "if thy caste were as high as thy

usefulness, verily thou wouldest be a prince in the land, and then thy usefulness would melt into stupidity. As it is, it shall be well rewarded. I purpose now to see and speak with the Feringhee pig alone. Conduct me to his sty."

The man led the way with cat-like tread through many winding passages, and up and down several flights of stairs, till he came to a door high up under the roof. Having unlocked it he stood aside, with a low obeisance, for his master to pass.

"Remain out of hearing but within call," Govindjee said, and gathering together his robes in an unconscious gesture of disgust, he entered the room. It was a fairly spacious apartment, furnished with a *charpoy* or wooden bedstead, a strip of jail-made carpet, and one cane chair. A crock of

water stood in a corner, an oil lamp dangled from the ceiling, and a platter of half-finished food was placed on a stool by the bed, while empty bottles were everywhere strewn around. Thus all actual necessities, and what some deem luxuries, were provided for, and yet the sight on which Govindjee gazed half eagerly, half in scorn—the sight of the occupant of the room—was more like than honest poverty to make angels weep.

Gilroy, still wearing the European rags in which he had appeared before the Kotwal, lay on the bed, half hidden by wreaths of smoke from an evil-smelling pipe between his lips. In one hand he clutched a bottle from which he was pouring brandy into a cracked canteen mug. His eyes were bloodshot, and his face flushed and bloated,

but the supply of liquor having been constant and regular, he had lost some of the shakiness born of gross orgies alternated with forced abstention. A fierce, wild-beast-like expression had taken the place of the vacuous stare which had marked him at the trial—a fact due to his having been prohibited the use of opium by the Dewan. A creature to be pitied before, he had now the look of a dangerous man—to be pitied certainly, but to be feared as well.

Blinking through the mist of tobacco-smoke, his accustomed eyes quickly descried his host. With Jeswunt for his sole associate, his knowledge of the native tongue had greatly improved, and he now spoke fluently enough.

“Ha! Dewan Sahib,” he exclaimed, “I

am rejoiced that you have come to see me, for I am getting sick of this. Your hospitality has been noble, and the liquor good—if somewhat insufficient in quantity. But your conditions are hard. How long am I to remain coped up here?”

Choking and sneezing in the filthy fumes, Govindjee nevertheless went close up to the bed and scanned him intently.

“My friend,” said the Dewan, “it is always a pleasure to be able to meet the desires of a guest. I come to propose that you should go abroad in the streets this very day.”

Gilroy raised himself on his elbow and regarded his host menacingly.

“You are not going to turn me out to starve?” he hissed. “Do not forget that a man in my position is to be bought by

the highest bidder. Harichand would give a good price to learn the history of that anonymous letter."

"This is fool's talk," replied Govindjee. "As long as you are useful to me, so long shall I be useful to you. When you go forth from here you will be at liberty to return at your will, and I shall continue to supply you with the means of subsistence, aye, and with money to be expended in the public service. The only difference will be, that instead of remaining in seclusion you will be at large in the city. There is, however, a condition to be fulfilled—that you do the work which I shall entrust to you."

"What work?" growled Gilroy. "You can see for yourself that I am not able to do anything hard."

“My friend, have no fear,” returned Govindjee, with one of his bland smiles; “the work I have for you is eminently in your line; it—it is of a diplomatic nature, and requires the use of the tongue rather than of the hands.”

“That sounds better,” said Gilroy. “What is it you would have me to do?”

“Listen,” said Govindjee, bending lower over the bed. “The ruler of this city is a fool who does not know his own mind. He has fallen into the hands of that dog of a Christian missionary, who is undermining the peace of the State. It is rumoured that Harichand, being about to profess the accursed creed of the Nazarene, intends to signify his apostasy by neglecting the sacred rites of the *Doorga*—due now three days hence. Thus would the *musnud* of

Jhalwa, which has been occupied since the youth of the world by faithful followers of Brahma, feel the weight of a Christian heretic. Our customs would be changed, our gods despised, our shrines overthrown and violated. Our women would become even as dancing girls—visible to all men. This am I, Govindjee the Dewan, resolved to prevent; and other means having failed, if he sulks in the palace during the *Doorga*, Harichand must die.”

Govindjee paused to note the effect of his words. There was no horror at the proposal—only a miserable self-pity in Gilroy’s reply.

“If murder is what you want of me I am not man enough—now,” he faltered. “I should tremble too much when I came to strike the blow.”

"Did I not say that I required diplomacy, not handiwork of you?" returned Govindjee, reassured at least as to Gilroy's unscrupulousness. "I had already arranged to achieve my object by poison, but the agent has fallen sick, and it is too late to enlist another for that method. I have therefore devised a wider scheme, whereby not only the Rajah but his wife and the missionary shall be cut off by the sword."

"I have no objection," said Gilroy, scowling at the recollection of his fancied wrongs. "They both insulted me on board ship, and I owe all missionaries a grudge, inasmuch as they have robbed me of my patrimony."

"Well, there is no tool like a willing tool, and the matter will be safe with you," replied the Dewan. "Hearken to my

proposal. In the first place, you must abjure your religion and become a Mahomedan. Then in native garb you will go among the followers of Islam, choosing chiefly the *budmashes* of that creed, and will persuade them to turn their hands against the Christians at the coming festival instead of against the Hindoos. Nay more, you will, if you are skilful, be able to bring about an alliance between the Mahomedan and the Hindoo *budmashes*, so that they shall both combine against this base foe to ancient custom. In this you will be aided by money which I shall supply, and well I know that the rogues of Jhalwa will do anything for *backsheesh*. Having got so far, it will be easy to work both sects up into a fury against Harichand and his so-called Ranee. The troops of

the Rajah present in the city number only a hundred badly-equipped matchlockmen, who will either throw down their arms and run, or join the rioters. I shall take care that most of them are away at the festival. The palace and all therein will be at the mercy of the mob, and their fault will it be if Harichand, or his wife, or the missionary, or the apostates of our own race in the city, see another sunrise. When it is all over, I and the Kotwal will appear to quell the riot, and you must so arrange it with the leaders that they flee at my approach and are seen no more. Thus shall the old order reign again in Jhalwa, for the next heir is a child, and during his infancy the sole power will rest in my hands."

Gilroy had caught some of the other's

excitement, and was sitting on the side of the bed.

“It all sounds feasible,” he said thoughtfully ; “but why am I to be a Mahomedan ? Cannot you recommend your own creed ?”

“Most assuredly,” said Govindjee, “but circumstances demand that Islam should claim you. At a Hindoo festival the first attack comes from the Mahomedans ; my co-religionists are passive till they are molested. At a Mahomedan festival the reverse is the case. This being a Hindoo rite, it is among the followers of the Prophet that the mischief is brewing, and you must be where you can influence the initiators.”

Gilroy was satisfied with the reason given, which was, however, only partly true. In the event of any hitch the Dewan

meant that the arch-conspirators should not be found among those of his own creed.

“And what reward am I to have?” asked Gilroy. “A service such as this is worth more than house-room and a few meals.”

“Restrain your inclinations to strong drink for four days and do my bidding,” said Govindjee. “In the event of success I will give you five thousand rupees. If you fail, provided it is not through your own folly, you shall still be my guest here; but should your habits lead you astray on the threshold of success, then go hence and expect no more of me.”

And Govindjee chuckled inwardly as he thought of a certain Rajput bravo, whose dagger would save the bribe and rid him

of this tool in either case as soon as his work was done.

“I will leave you now,” he continued. “Think well over my words. Jeswunt shall bring you the garments of a Mahomedan fakir, and money wherewith to make friends. At sunset go out from here and mingle with the rascals who frequent the by-ways of the horse-market; that will be your best starting-point. Come here every night—taking care that you are seen of no man—to report how the scheme prospers. On the day preceding the *Doorga* I will instruct as to the most fitting time and manner of the attack on the palace. If Harichand rejects the persuasions of the missionary, this necessity may yet pass away, but it behoveth us to be prepared for his abstention. Fare thee well.”

That night there was subdued excitement among the Mussulman offscourings of the city. As in the West so in the East, concentrated scoundrelism has some strange affinity for the noblest of God's dumb animals, and Jhalwa was no exception. In the vicinity of the horse-market were to be found some of the worst blackguards in Asia, living without ostensible means, never doing any work, and ready for any crime that offered the price of a dinner. Mingling with the resident rascaldom there was always a floating population of effervescent fanatics from the North—wild-eyed Cabulis come with the latest string of Afghan ponies from beyond the Khyber, deserters from British native regiments, and travelling dervishes who traded their rags and their holiness

from town to town. These men congregated in groups in the purlieus of the market, talking and gesticulating far into the night, till the milder Hindoo *bud-mashes* began to take heed, and feared that at this *Doorga* their rivals were planning unusual violence.

The next night, however, it seemed that these apprehensions were unfounded, for the groups now consisted of both sects, interchanging unwonted courtesies, and casting darksome scowls, now at the palace, now in the direction of the Christian Mission. The Prophet and the Cow were friends for once. Ever and anon there would glide up to each group in turn a figure in waist-cloth and skull-cap, to be hailed with suppressed acclamation as "Sheikh Abdullah"—the name by which

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the recently-arrived Feringhee fakir wished to be known. Again the parleyings and head-shakings lasted to close on dawn, and after the renegade's visits the muttered threats of the scum of Jhalwa towards the palace would be deeper, their lowering glances in the direction of the Mission more frequent.

While the wolves howled round the fold,
what of the shepherd ?

CHAPTER XI.

“ALMOST THOU PERSUADEST ME TO BE A
CHRISTIAN.”

IT was the day before the *Doorga Pooja*. Harichand paced to and fro in his apartment, every now and then casting restless glances across the courtyard towards the main gateway. The Dewan had just departed from his daily audience, after reporting all quiet in the city, and that the festival bade fair to pass off without disturbance. Avoiding all show of undue interest, Govindjee had striven hard to sound the Rajah as to his own programme

at the ceremonies, but he had gone away no wiser than he came. All that he could discover was that the State elephant and the bodyguard had been ordered to parade as usual on these occasions—an arrangement which he was well aware could be countermanded at a moment's notice.

The Rajah's restlessness was not to be accounted for by any cares of state. The worst that he expected from the *Doorga* was an occasional broken head among his subjects—among those of them, too, who most deserved it. He had been too long in Europe, perhaps, to estimate at its full value the rancour of creed difference rampant at this season; and with the additional complacence arising from Govindjee's assurance that all would be well, he had hardly given the festival a second thought

from that point of view. And yet the *Doorga* was directly the cause of his uneasiness, for deep down in his heart, and almost unknown to him, conviction of the truth had lodged at last. He felt that the morrow must decide the issue whether to give it public expression or to try and stifle it for ever, but at this supreme crisis the one to whom he looked for help and guidance was strangely absent from his post. It seemed that in the hour of his need Harichand was to be left to stand or fall alone.

John Deacon had not been near the palace for three days. The spell which had fastened on him after Laura Temple's visit to the Mission, and which had turned his halting footsteps away from Harichand, was still rending him in twain. In his

unnerved state he dared not put himself in a position which would demand an instant decision. All through the two days which he remained away—sometimes working feverishly in the slums, sometimes lying deathly sick in his little chamber off the mission-room—he felt that he was stultifying his own action whichever course he adopted. Even the voice which had urged him to withhold the warning had alleged as a reason the completion of the Rajah's conversion, and here were the precious moments slipping by, and he was doing nothing to that end. What would be his own feelings if Harichand, through his neglect, performed the vain mummeries of the *Doorga*, and abandoned all idea of Christianity for ever? Though the value of the warning would, in that case, have been

negatived, he himself would to his life's end doubly feel the remorse of having kept silence in vain. And yet that other alternative of striving for Harichand's soul, the while he was handing over his body to the secret poisoner! Oh, if he could only make up his mind to go straight to the palace, give the warning, and trust to God's grace and his own suasion to keep Harichand's footsteps in the right way!

He tried hard enough to bring himself to this latter course during those two days. Long and earnestly did he pray for guidance, but running through the thread of his prayers, and interposing a tear-stained face between him and the Throne, rose ever the vision of the woman weeping in the zenana garden—seeming to hold him back so that

he could not give his whole heart to the prayer. Perhaps this was why the guidance did not come. His body, weakened by constant strain before, failed to sustain him under this new burden, so that he was physically unfitted for the effort which he was called on to make. Every time a foot-step sounded on the stairs he trembled lest it should be Laura Temple come to ask him if precautions had been taken. He need have had no fear; for, firm in her perfect trust in him, Laura was too busy elsewhere to pursue what she would have deemed needless inquiries. Had she come, her medical knowledge would have recognized at once that he was not himself, and perhaps the climax would have been changed, or brought about by other means. But, as ever, when God's own children are

passing through the troubled waters, what was was best.

On the morning before the festival, John Deacon recognized that his mind would give way if he suffered his inaction to continue any longer. He would force himself to go to the palace, and make one supreme effort to shake the Rajah's resistance; for, whatever else might betide, that at least was plainly the call of duty. As to the warning, in his ignorance of Govindjee's change of plan, he now argued with himself that even up to a late hour on the morrow there would still be plenty of time—that the danger did not threaten till the evening meal on the day of the *Doorga*, and that he might, if he relented, dash the poisoned cup to the ground at the last moment. To-day at any rate he would be

all missionary ; to-morrow perhaps other considerations would prevail. It was far from a satisfactory condition of mind, but it was the best into which the tortured spirit could twist itself. In the meanwhile the thought that whatever was done that day need not be final, came to him with all the relief of a reprieve to one condemned to die.

So it was that Harichand, pacing up and down in the room over the durbar hall, at length saw John Deacon emerge from the main gate, and cross the courtyard to the private entrance. The next minute they were shaking hands. On the point of upbraiding his visitor for his absence, Harichand checked himself and said—

“I see, you have been ill. Your eyes are strangely bright, and there are red

spots on your checks. I have missed you, but I am sorry you have come if you are not strong enough for argument. I have my batteries all in position ready to repel your assault, but I should not be satisfied with a cheap victory over an ailing opponent."

John Deacon's heart leaped within him. Something in the other's manner suggested that it was defeat, not victory, that he was courting.

"I have not been very well for a few days," was the reply, "but I am ready for work—I *must* work—this morning."

And then, trampling down his own bodily infirmities, John Deacon wrestled for Harichand's soul as he had never wrestled before. The Rajah's scepticism, at first merely careless, had of late been

more obstinate than profound; and now that he had set himself to listen, John Deacon's reasoning, at once clear-headed and impetuous, fell with sledge-hammer force upon all the second-hand claptrap he had cribbed from Hume and Voltaire. Did he doubt the historical accuracy of the Bible? John Deacon proved it to him by comparing it with other histories written and accepted by infidels. Did he doubt the Bible as the revealed Word of God? John Deacon proved it up to the hilt by citing the fulfilment of a score of prophecies. Did he allege the stale old argument that the Bible and the discoveries of modern science are irreconcilable? John Deacon called in the testimony of the stars, of the earth's strata, and of chemistry to show that the two were as one upon every vital

issue. And when at last, beaten from point to point, Harichand fell back on the last resource of doubting the miracles and denying the divinity of Christ, John Deacon answered—

“You say that the miracles may be accounted for by juggling or mesmerism—that in India at this day there are conjurers who perform equally marvellous feats. I ask you, has any one of these jugglers, or any other *man* since the creation of the world, ever succeeded in raising the dead to life? There is no such record, you say. Very well; I ask you further, has any *man*, other than Him whose resurrection is written in the book of which you have just admitted the historical accuracy—has any man, I say, ever before or ever since been able to burst the bonds

of the grave, and *himself* return in the flesh to this lower world? Had this power been human, would it not have been exercised by these wonderful jugglers of yours and by others? Would no one else through all the centuries have found out the secret? Remember, the love of life is strong."

Harichand made no reply, but walking to the window stood looking out into the courtyard, while in John Deacon's ears there rang the echo of his own last words—"The love of life is strong." The resonance of his peroration stabbed him like a knife. All through his triumphant championship of the cause he had lost himself in the final endeavour to carry conviction to the Rajah's heart; considerations of time and space, even of his own and of

the other's personality, had been forgotten in that supreme effort; he had fought the fight with no thought but how best to gain the surest victory. But now that Hari-chand's silence—perhaps the silence of defeat—gave him pause, there was borne in upon him by that last sentence of his own a full recollection of the tragedy upon which he was engaged. "The love of life is strong!" And every burning word he had been uttering tended, unless he revealed what he knew, to take his hearer's life from him. Somewhere deep down in his heart another voice—not the one which had spoken so glibly in the mission-room—told him that if this was not treachery, it was at least culpable fanaticism. He opened his mouth to divulge the plot.

But just at that moment, and before his

parched lips found utterance, there flew past the window one of the tame pigeons which the poor prisoner of the zenana had been in the habit of feeding daily in her garden. Perhaps this particular bird was only a certain serpent in disguise, but, be this as it may, the association served to distract John Deacon from his purpose, and to divert his mind to Amy's hopeless misery. The opportunity was lost, for Harichand, probably startled from his train of thought by the gaudy plumage of the bird, turned and broke the spell.

He had been adjusting disputes in the durbar hall earlier in the morning, and his full regalia of jewelled turban and cloth of gold vest emphasized the kindly dignity with which he spoke. Even John Deacon, whose sturdy northern radicalism made

him no great venerator of principalities and powers, and who was usually far more perturbed by the Brahmin caste-mark on the Rajah's forehead than impressed by his raiment, was fain to confess that, prince or no prince, Harichand looked every inch a gentleman.

"My friend," he said,—“for surely if I have any friends you are the chief of them all—the battle is over ; the ammunition, at any rate on my side, is exhausted. I own myself vanquished, but it does not follow that I capitulate.”

John Deacon went as pale as death.

“But if you believe you cannot go back on your belief,” he was beginning. “Let me——”

“Not one word more now, my friend,” interposed Harichand. “We both need

rest, and I must have leisure for much anxious deliberation. It is no small thing for the representative of an ancient people to renounce their religion. Come here to-morrow morning at eight—the procession to the temple is fixed to start at nine—and I will either ask you to spend the day with me or say farewell to you for ever. To-morrow at eight, remember.”

And before John Deacon could reply, Harichand had passed through the private door into his apartments, locking it behind him. As the former crept wearily back to the Mission, the fact was forced upon his pre-occupation, that the *budmashes* who usually jeered him either kept out of his way furtively or greeted him with deep salaams.

CHAPTER XII.

“RETRO ME, SATHANAS.”

JHALWA was up betimes on the day of the *Doorga*. From sunrise onwards the chief thoroughfares, fed by many a tortuous gully and dark alley-way, teemed with throngs of noisy devotees, weirdly-masked mummers, and miscellaneous spectators hurrying all in one direction—the temple of Gunga beyond the city wall. These were the younger and more ardent members of the populace, who, by reaching the centre of attraction early, hoped to prolong their enjoyment of the fun of the fair.

Others, including the elder and more discreet of the citizens, gathered in great crowds in the neighbourhood of the palace, ready to follow the Rajah's procession if it started, or to criticize severely if he justified the rumour of his abstention.

The riots, if any, on these occasions generally emanated from the rough horse-play which prevailed on the return of the crowds at sundown, but this *Doorga* promised to pass off without disturbance, for one fact provoked universal comment. The dangerous classes—the idlers and rogues of both creeds who were usually so conspicuous—appeared with one consent to be going to ignore the day. Lazily sunning themselves in their accustomed nooks and corners, they lay about in their rags and their filth, or remained as yet invisible in

the rookeries which gave them sanctuary, seemingly forgetful of their feuds. Only among a few of the older and more knowing inhabitants was there some head-shaking and brow-lifting over the phenomenal quiet of the customary offenders. The day was yet young, these worthies said.

John Deacon, too, on his way to the palace, passed out of Wadia's Gully and along the bazaars without being molested by jeer or scowl from those who might well have been expected to seize on the great festival as a chance for anti-Christian demonstration. The crowds through whom he had to push his way were composed of heathens certainly, but most of them were respectable citizens who could hate him very bitterly without calling names. He had had some refreshing sleep, and though

still haggard and careworn, had lost the look of feverish unrest which had marked him on the previous days. His eye and hand were steady again, and his mouth had resumed its old firm line of determination. In short, John Deacon's prayer had been answered, guidance had been vouchsafed to him, and he saw his way clearly enough at last.

When he came to the open space by the palace, his path was blocked by the vast crowd that was hustling and craning to get a view of the State elephant, which in all the glory of gilded howdah and crimson trappings was waiting at the main gate. Just as John Deacon had elbowed his way through the throng, and was about to pass under the archway, Govindjee came shambling out from the palace, and said five words

to the mahout in charge of the elephant. They were only five little words, but they quickened John Deacon's pulses, and told him that unless the Rajah changed his mind in the next few minutes, that was to be a great day for Christianity in Jhalwa.

“Take him back to the paddock,” Govind-jee said to the mahout; and then addressing the subahdah in command, he ordered him to dismiss the bodyguard, as the escort would not be required; adding that by the Rajah's gracious permission the men were to have a holiday, so that they could attend the ceremonies in their private capacities. Having thus delivered himself, the Dewan passed on through the salaaming spectators, without appearing to notice John Deacon—unless it was the sight of the missionary that made him rub his hands and smile so

genially at the evident disappointment of the dispersing crowds.

Hurrying on through the gate, John Deacon was at once admitted at the Rajah's private entrance. He found Harichand awaiting him on the scene of yesterday's conflict, and there was no need to look twice to see what the decision had been. The Rajah was quietly dressed as an English gentleman in a suit of dark-blue serge, and—matter of greater significance—the Brahmin caste-mark was gone from his forehead. He came forward with outstretched hand, but before he could speak John Deacon waved him back, and said—

“I see how it is with you, but I refuse to accept your decision till you have heard me. In securing your conversion I have criminally concealed a conspiracy against

your life. Govindjee has arranged for your death by poison to-night if you are absent from the ceremonies.”

For a moment Harichand looked very grave, then, with a smile, again held out his hand.

“My friend,” he said, “if it be as you say, where is the blame of your conduct? This is zeal, not treachery—seeing that you have warned me in good time to frustrate the plot. And had you so low an opinion of my courage, as to think that this danger would frighten me from a decision once taken?”

John Deacon, still with his hands behind his back, braced himself up and looked the Rajah firmly but sorrowfully in the face.

“I have deceived myself on that point

now for three days," he said. "I will not deceive you for one second. To some extent I feared the effect of this danger on your conversion, but behind that fear there has been, God help me, the shadow of a great temptation. In keeping back this warning I now know that I was influenced by thoughts of your wife—of her possible release. Can you hold out your hand again—in forgiveness—after that?"

"That can I," said Harichand; "and I can give you comfort as well as forgiveness. Instead of shaking you have confirmed my resolve, for what greater blessing could a man have than a religion so honest as to prompt the confession you have made to me? But you must not take this to heart, my friend. At most you have but suffered a temptation which has been nobly trodden

down ; and well I know you have been ill and overworked of late.”

In the hand-grip which followed, not only was there lifted the load which had well-nigh overwhelmed this true servant, but there fell to pieces once for all the most cunning assault planned by the Evil One against the Church of Christ in India for many a year. The trouble yet to come was but the work of man.

“And now what of this plot?” said Harichand. “Is it really authentic and serious?”

John Deacon briefly related Laura Temple’s report of Jadeh’s disclosure, concluding his narrative with a question as to the girl’s condition.

“I am told that she is better,” said Harichand, “but Miss Temple is due to visit

her this morning, and will be able to inform us. It will be well if she recovers ; even now I can hardly believe in Govindjee's villainy."

"But you will take steps to counteract it ?" asked John Deacon anxiously.

"Most assuredly," was the reply. "I shall be careful about my food ; and beyond this, when we have seen Miss Temple, I shall order the Dewan's immediate arrest. If he is behind this plot he may after all be the schemer who has destroyed Amy's happiness and mine. God grant I may be able to prove it to my poor wife's satisfaction."

"If you start on the supposition of Govindjee's guilt I am sure you will," was the reply, "and then out of all this misery will come only good."

"Good *shall* come out of it in any case,

even if happiness does not, for the first act of my faith shall be to set her free,” said Harichand. “Come, let us go to her. She refuses to see me, but you shall carry to her the tidings of her liberty. Perhaps before she goes with Miss Temple she will allow me to beg for forgiveness.”

Happy in the new-found strength which enabled him to do that which was lawful and right—as distinguished from that which was lawful only—Harichand passed out of the eventful chamber, little thinking that it was for the last time. John Deacon too might have cast a lingering glance at the scene alike of his greatest self-abasement and of his greatest victory, had he known what was as yet in mercy hidden behind the veil. As it was, he followed Harichand with no room for other thought than of

great joy at the fulfilment of his dearest hopes, of sorrow for the sin with which he had dallied, and of gratitude for his timely deliverance.

Together they descended to the courtyard, and crossed to the zenana entrance. Most of the palace attendants were away by permission at the festival, and an air of sleepy solitude prevailed which savoured of desertion. Two discontented matchlockmen were on sentry at the main gate, and half-a-dozen more, under the orders of a *naick*, dozed and grumbled by turns in the guard-house. One of the Nubians lounged at the zenana doorway, and here and there in the porticos a recumbent figure rose to salaam as the Rajah passed, but of the everyday bustle there was none. Outside the precincts too silence reigned, for the crowds of an

hour ago were disporting themselves round the temple on the plain, five miles away; nothing but the occasional yelp of a distant dog disturbed the hush which had fallen on the city.

In obedience to Harichand's gesture, the giant Nubian took a key from his *cummerbund* and gave them admission. At the foot of the stairs they were met by the native nurse who had care of Jadeh, and they learned from her that the "Doctor Mem Sahib" was expected every minute. The patient was decidedly better, and quite herself. In answer to a further question, the woman said that the Ranee was not in the garden; her Highness was in her apartments up-stairs.

"Very well," said Harichand, after a pause, "conduct the Sahib to her presence,

and say that he visits her by my request." Then, in English, he added to John Deacon, "I will go through and wait in the garden. If she will let you bring her to me there, well and good; but in any case give her to understand that she is free to stay with Miss Temple till she is satisfied of Luxmeebhai's death. Tell her how you have wrought this change in my purpose, and how I regret my conduct, but, mind, I will not have you making any more needless confessions—to-day or ever."

John Deacon merely nodded, his eyes filling, and began to ascend the stairs, but Harichand was not satisfied, and called after him—

"Promise me that never to Amy or to any one else will you mention the—the date of your warning."

“If it is your wish,” was the grudging reply; “but I think Miss Temple ought to know. She did her duty if I failed in mine.”

“Neither Miss Temple nor any one shall ever know,” said Harichand impetuously. “I take that as a promise, remember.”

John Deacon turned away choking, and Harichand passed through to the garden. It was a peaceful spot, whose high walls and shaded winding walks might have suggested the pleasaunce of some old-world monastery, had it not been for the rich tropical foliage of palm and mango, plantain and banyan tree. Harichand was in just the humour to appreciate reposeful calm, and, seating himself at a point whence he could watch the zenana door, he allowed his mind to luxuriate amid a profusion of

good resolutions. John Deacon should have that church built for him on the waste land close to the palace; Christians in Jhalwa should be encouraged and helped; and though he would interfere with no man's religious liberty, he would let it be seen that the faith which was his own had his chief sympathy. The people might not like it at first, but after all he was ruler of Jhalwa, and—with a touch of the old Orientalism—they would have to get used to it. And as for Amy—poor ill-used Amy, his best and most cherished possession—now that he was on the track of Govind-jee's scheming villainy, he would soon have her back at the palace, happy and proud in the consciousness that she was in truth his real and honoured wife. He would atone by a life's devotion for the misery of the past.

Yes, John Deacon should most assuredly have that church; and besides, he would send a lakh of rupees to the Mission in England, so that they could build other churches where they were most needed. Jhalwa was not a large or a rich State, and it would be a tight fit to find the money, but found it should be—even if he had to put down his bodyguard to do it. What was his “army,” after all, but the pretentious appanage of a royalty which itself was more than half a sham? There were only a hundred of them all told, and he felt just as safe to-day with his “horse, foot, and artillery” away at the ceremonies as he did when they were in their quarters. A good police force, now, organized on the European plan, and freed from all the old corruption, might be less showy, but would

be twice as useful in protecting the city from enemies who were all internal. He would set about it at once, and——

His train of thought was interrupted by a sound far away in the city—so far away that it had no terrors for the green parakeets fluttering in the plantain grove, or for the little grey squirrels that gambolled in and out of the palace eaves. Barely distinguishable at first from the hum of insect life that alone broke the stillness of the garden, it only forced itself upon Harichand's attention by a variation from the dull monotone of its commencement. The original sound resembled nothing so much as a continuous deep-drawn moan, developing by slow gradations into the buzzing of a swarm of bees, but about the variation there was no doubt. It was the un-

mistakable cry of a human soul in dire extremity, and with that one appalling shriek the distant moaning swelled triumphantly, and asserted itself as the ominous murmur of an angry mob ; then after a brief space it died away.

The Rajah had barely time to realize that the *budmashes* were abroad, and to wish that his new police force was an accomplished fact, when he espied Amy and John Deacon coming from the palace. The sight drove all other thought from his mind, for he could see by his wife's face that he was forgiven. In another moment the words of reconciliation would have been spoken, when they were silenced by an interruption which struck the first vague chill of alarm to all their hearts.

Hatless, and with her riding-habit besmirched with filthy mud, Laura Temple was hastening down the steps from the zenana to the garden. They waited her approach in silence, some idea of what had happened forming in the minds of the two men, but Amy only wondering. Troubled as Laura's face was, a gleam of pleasure crossed it on seeing Amy and Harichand together.

"There is no time to give or to hear explanations," she cried, when she was within hearing. "The *budmashes* have broken out into open riot, and are killing the Christians. I barely escaped from them as I rode through the city. I fear they have taken one life already, and—a word with your Highness."

Harichand stepped a pace aside with

her, and Laura went on hurriedly in a lower tone—

“From what I heard as I came through them, I believe they are coming to the palace. Cries of ‘Kill the Rajah!’ ‘Kill the Rance!’ ‘Kill the missionary!’ were raised on all sides. Now I know your Highness is self-reliant, but you are literally at the mercy of these ruffians. You must give me a line to Colonel Barker at Chatra asking for assistance. I can be there by hard riding in twenty minutes, and the British troops should be here in an hour and a half. For Amy’s sake give me the note.”

“But your own risk?” he said.

“There is none,” said Laura. “I shall go by the Ajmeer Gate, which is quite clear. The rioters are at present round the horse-market.”

Harichand tore a leaf from his pocket-book, wrote a few lines, and handed them to her.

"I had been going to ask you to take care of Amy for a while, but that must wait," he said. "I would not let you go, but that I have not a mounted man to send. They are all at the temple. How can I ever thank you for this brave service?"

"By holding the palace till you hear the drums and fifes," replied Laura, gathering up her habit. "God strengthen you to do it!"

And with a cheery wave to Amy and John Deacon she sped away, before they could question her, back through the zenana to the courtyard, where her horse was waiting.

A minute or two later she was galloping across the open country to where the walls of the barracks shone white in the sunlight—a haven of hope indeed, but four long miles away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RAGE OF THE HEATHEN.

AT Laura's abrupt departure Amy turned to Harichand with looks full of anxious inquiry, and John Deacon announced his intention of going at once to succour, or to suffer with, his harassed flock.

"Let us go into the palace," said Harichand shortly. "I have orders to give, and we can then decide on what is best to be done."

That was no time for many words. He took Amy's hand, and in the brief interval before they reached the zenana steps, a

few broken sentences made them friends again.

“It would not be safe for you to go out to-day,” he added, “but as soon as the rioting has ceased you shall go with Miss Temple to the cantonments. And, dearest, it will not be for long. In a day or two I hope to have the proofs which will enable you to return.”

Having seen Amy safely to the foot of her stairs, Harichand led John Deacon into the courtyard, and told him Laura Temple’s news, and what the brave girl was doing for their safety. While placing no obstacles in the way of his departure, he strongly urged his friend to remain in the palace.

“Believe me,” he added, “I am not only asking this of you because of the risk

to yourself, which, frankly, I dread, but because every available arm may be wanted here. I have not half-a-dozen men whom I can depend upon, and no weapons worth speaking of."

"What shall you do?" asked John Deacon.

"Gather such as care to join us in the zenana and barricade it," was the reply. "It is the strongest part of the palace, and the most difficult to assault."

"And I will help you to defend it," said John Deacon; "but first I must run into the city and see if I can be of use to my poor people. If I can collect them I may bring them here, may I not?"

"Every one, if you can," said Harichand; "but for our sakes do not expose yourself. I will keep the gate open till you return,

and may God speed you. You are a missionary, but you are a man first."

With which quaint speech the Rajah turned into the guard-house to see what men were available, and John Deacon hurried forth from the palace, bent on collecting as many of his converts as he could find. In the hour of physical danger he was as cool as men of his stamp always are, but in suspecting the hand of Govindjee in this, he found renewed cause for self-reproach. Had he brought the Dewan to book two days ago, the fatal error of leaving the *budmash* and the handful of Christians together as sole occupants of the city might have been prevented. Always prone to exaggerate his fault, this new regret goaded him well-nigh to desperation as he sped along.

Now it fell out that in laying his plans Govindjee had made one trifling oversight, which, while it in no way detracted from the completeness of the riot or from the ultimate purpose of the rioters, served to hinder the realization of John Deacon's worst apprehensions. In securing the ruthless services of an anti-Christian mob the Dewan had forgotten an invariable practice of rioters, provided they are strong enough to carry it out—the practice of wrecking the jail and liberating the prisoners. The Jhalwa rabble, most of whom had a relative or friends in the city chowk, had no idea of allowing an inspired occasion like the present to pass as an exception to the rule. Shrewdly guessing that the real donor of the *backsheesh* which had been so plentifully bestowed was one

in authority, they were less than ever inclined to put a limit to excesses for which they expected immunity. When they first broke out in the neighbourhood of the horse-market, they therefore made for the jail, *en route* thither attacking and leaving for dead an aged Christian whom they chanced to meet, and whose cry had startled Harichand in the garden. It was only when they had burst open and fired the prison that they turned to the real business of the day, with their ranks strengthened by a large contingent of liberated jail-birds.

But in the meanwhile the old man who had been maltreated was found on the spot where he fell by a brother convert, and being still alive, though sorely hurt, was able to give warning of the threatened

attack. Having carried the wounded man into the Mission, the rescuer ran from house to house and from street to street where Christians were known to dwell, and so managed to bring seventy souls back to Wadia's Gully. The women and children were stowed in the Mission-house, while the men, to the number of forty, prepared to withstand the rioters at the entrance to the gully, which was fortunately so narrow that only two could pass through abreast. Those of the regular inhabitants of the slum who were not away at the festival were with the *budmash*, so that the little band of native Christians had their retreat to themselves, and as the place was a *cul de sac*, with only the one approach, the two score felt as strong as a multitude. The danger of

fire was precluded by the presence among the rioters of so many of the denizens of the Gully.

Thus it was that when John Deacon turned out of the deserted copper-market into the cloth bazaar, he saw a crowd of five hundred of the worst characters in the city congregated round the entrance to the Gully. They were rending the air with demon cries of rage, and were surging and jostling towards the point of attack, but there was no diminution in their numbers, nor did any seem to pass in or out. Concealing himself as best he could behind the irregular projections of the houses, John Deacon went some way up the street, and quickly perceived the reason of the stoppage. The thoroughfare into the Gully was blocked by a resolute little band, upon
s

whom the assailants could make no impression, because no more than two of them could come into action at a time. Wadia's Gully had been converted into a second Thermopylæ, with every prospect of an equally glorious issue.

Having ascertained that it was impossible for him to communicate with the defenders, and that the latter were safe for the present, John Deacon dived down a by-street, and assured himself, by finding the houses of several of his converts empty, that most if not all of the Christians were collected at the Mission. Knowing as he did that the British troops were probably by this time under arms, a great load was lifted from his mind, and he began to hope that all might yet be well, when above the confused din in the bazaar cries

of "To the palace!" became distinguishable. Foiled in their attempt on the humbler quarry, the rioters were evidently disposed to seek a higher and perhaps an easier prey.

There was a short cut from where John Deacon found himself to the palace, and down this by-way he was hurrying, with the object of heading off the mob, when, turning a corner rapidly, he saw two men coming towards him. In his eagerness to reach the palace before the rioters, his first inclination was to avoid the pair, especially as a second glance showed him that both the men wore the hideous skull-caps of State convicts. But as they neared him he saw that the younger and taller of the newcomers was guiding and supporting the tottering steps of the other. The latter

appeared to have been badly injured, and it was not in John Deacon to turn from distress. Going on to proffer assistance, he was astonished to hear himself hailed with every expression of delight by the taller of the advancing pair. It was Julloo the blacksmith, whom, in the disfigurement of a convict cap, he had been slow to recognize—the “Pride of the Mission,” haggard and emaciated after the hardships of jail life, but ready as ever with his cheery smile, and so pleased at the meeting that to get an explanation was difficult.

“The Sahib must not think I am running away of my own free will,” he said. “The chowk is on fire. Wicked men came but now and lighted it. It was death to remain, and so the doors being open I came away. I was taking this poor

man to the Mission to see if the Doctor Mem Sahib was there. He has been sorely hurt in escaping from the fire."

Turning his gaze on Julloo's *protégé*, John Deacon experienced a vague thrill of recognition, which a second scrutiny of the wizened features changed into certainty. The injured convict was none other than Rati Ram, the water-carrier, whom he had seen on the occasion of the confession at the palace. Surely this was the hand of Providence!

"Come with me," he said. "The Mission is surrounded by rioters; it is impossible to join our friends there. We will take this poor fellow to the palace; he will be attended to as quickly as anywhere there."

Hearing this the injured water-carrier groaned a half-pleased assent, and Julloo,

with his eyes full of wonder at the strange destination, but without thought of question, again took hold of his charge.

With John Deacon's assistance Rati Ram was carried quickly through the deserted streets. Now and again a woman's face would peep from an upper window, or a naked child would stare from a doorway, but there was no one to interfere, or any sign, save the smoke of the burning jail, and the distant yells of the rioters, of the turmoil that raged so near. As they hurried along John Deacon briefly informed Julloo of the object of the riot, and of the threatened attack on the palace. At the news that Harichand had embraced Christianity Julloo became so jubilant that he nearly dropped his burden.

"Let us hasten, Sahib," he cried; "we

must be there in time to help our Christian Rajah. Gladly would I give my life for him, and for you, and for the Ranee, if only I knew that my wife and my little ones were safe."

"They were not at your house just now," replied John Deacon; "I think they must be safe in the Gully with the rest of our people."

As they came in sight of the palace they saw Harichand himself standing alone in the open space before the main gate, anxiously looking towards the city. He was evidently overjoyed at John Deacon's safe return, and hastened forward to meet the party.

"Welcome back!" he cried, as soon as he was within hearing. "But"—noting the caps of the convicts—"you are in

strange company, are you not? How has it fared with the rest of your good followers?"

"This man is a Christian, and another of Govindjee's victims," said John Deacon, pointing to the salaaming and smiling Julloo; and he hurriedly explained the circumstances of the prisoners' escape, and described the position of the Christians at the Mission, adding a whispered hint as to Rati Ram's identity.

A flash of pleasure lighted up the Rajah's face as he grasped the importance of being able to himself examine the water-carrier before Govindjee knew that he was suspected, but there was no time for questions then. Already the shouts of the rioters were growing nearer and fiercer, and any moment might bring into view the eager forerunners

of the mob thirsting for spoil and blood. Leading the way through the archway, Harichand at once gave orders to his half-dozen matchlockmen to close and bar the gate.

“The hinges are so loose and rusty that the gate will only keep them in check for a few minutes,” he said, “but every second may make all the difference. The zenana is luckily strong, and that is the place for our stand. If we had reliable firearms it would be a good thing for the rioters to burst into the courtyard, for we could shoot them through the windows. As it is, these matchlocks will be more likely to damage their owners than the enemy.”

“God grant there may be no cause for bloodshed,” said John Deacon gravely.

When the outer gate was shut, Harichand

ordered every one into the zenana, and the massive door was secured behind them. The matchlockmen having been told to hold themselves in readiness in a room on the ground floor, the Rajah himself assisted John Deacon and Julloo to carry Rati Ram up-stairs. Here he was placed on a couch in the dining-room, where they were joined by Amy, who by this time had been necessarily apprised of their danger. Pale and quiet, she was yet very calm, and strong in her faith in the result of Laura Temple's brave errand.

While Harichand watched the outer gate through one of the port-holed windows, John Deacon examined the water-carrier's injuries, and found that not only was his thigh badly crushed, but that he was so exhausted that he was likely to faint. Little

thinking that the patient was so intimately connected with her trouble, Amy suggested that a stimulant should be given him, and fetching some poured it down his throat. The effect of the unwonted spirit on the convict's half-starved frame was magical. Struggling to a sitting posture on the couch, he seemed to forget his pain, and pointing a skinny finger at the Rajah, called to him excitedly—

“Highness! Highness! thy slave would have speech of thee. It is said that thou art a merciful prince, and surely it would be safer to trust to the tigers of the jungle than to the faith of Govindjee the Dewan. Listen while this poor man discloses his own wickedness, and that of others which is greater.”

Harichand told Julloo to take his place

at the window, and came at once to the couch, while John Deacon and Amy gathered round. The latter knew enough Hindoostanee now to understand the man's words, and he had not got far in this, his second confession, before her hand stole up and rested on her husband's shoulder. And all the time the water-carrier's shrill tones had a *crescendo* accompaniment in the howls of the approaching mob.

"Highness," began Rati Ram, "the words which I spoke about Luxmeebhai were false. No truth was in them except that my sister was formerly tiring-woman to the wife of the Thakore of Dhoonghar. The little Luxmeebhai—your Highness's infant wife—died in childhood, as was supposed. It is my own daughter who lives to this day,

in ignorance of the use that was to be made of her. Govindjee the Dewan put lies in my mouth, threatening me, if I did not consent, with death for a crime I had not committed."

"The *budmash* are at the gate!" cried Julloo from the port-hole. "They hurl themselves against it. Ah, Highness! hark to their shouts!"

The noise was deafening, but the others paid no heed to it.

"Consider yourself pardoned for this and all other crimes, real or imputed," said Harichand, turning again to the water-carrier; "only speak truth now, and all truth. You were overheard making the confession to the Dewan in your own house. How did that come to pass?"

"Govindjee came to my house to make

sure that I knew my task, Highness," continued Rati Ram. "Why should I be silent as to his deeds when he has allowed his wretched instrument to remain in prison, knowing full well that there I could not speak? On the day when I was to say my false lies at the palace, the Thakore of Dhoonghar was already waiting at the Dewan's house, so that he dared not give me my lesson there. It so fell out that there was no need of it, for when Govindjee came I repeated the story, already so carefully learned, without a mistake—even swearing by dread Humayoon to the truth thereof."

"And a greater than Humayoon has preserved your sin from harming us, Rati Ram," said Harichand; adding, as he took Amy, all unresisting, into his arms—"So

passes away the great trouble of our life, I
lope."

The words were hardly spoken when the crash of the falling main gate echoed through the room, and with horrid yells and fiendish laughter the mob streamed into the courtyard, four hundred strong.

CHAPTER XIV.

“AIM LOW, FUSILIERS !”

IT would be difficult to follow the workings of John Deacon's mind, as the water-carrier brushed away the last shred of doubt that lingered over Amy's marriage. One moment he was lifted up with gratitude at the happy issue ; the next he was bowed down with shame at his own presumption, in that he had thought to improve on the decrees of Him, who had, once again, done all things well. Then, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, he revelled in the consolation of having beaten down the

devil's lure, only to blame himself directly afterwards for the consequences of a delayed warning. One thing is very certain: in all the varying moods which claimed him in that five minutes, not one grain of selfishness, or aught but genuine joy at the reunion of husband and wife, found place in his heart.

The fall of the main gate, and the crowding of the rioters into the courtyard, recalled him in common with the others to the immediate present. Harichand sprang to the head of the stairs and summoned three of the matchlockmen, ordering the others to remain below to guard the door. There were but five of the male household servants in the zenana, such others as had not gone to the *Doorga* having slipped away at the first hint of attack ; but those who stayed—

among them the two giant Nubians—were all staunch and true. These men, having no firearms, were useless for offence, but the Rajah stationed them inside the barred communicating doors at each end of the corridor, to try and stay any flank assault that might be made through the interior of the other wings. There remained the garden entrance at the back, and here, behind the closed and bolted door, Julloo was posted, armed with one of the tulwars which Harichand had torn down from a trophy on the wall. Amy, though advised to go to one of the smaller chambers at the back, preferred, for the sake of her husband's company, to remain in the central room, and she was allowed to have her way. John Deacon constituted himself inspector of fortifications, and went from entrance to

entrance seeing to the security of the fastenings.

Having made his dispositions for defence, Harichand surveyed the courtyard through one of the port-hole windows. He was no coward, but the sight which met his gaze caused him to strain his ears longingly for the first tap of the British drums. The whole space teemed with a jeering rabble, whose crime-stained faces and lithe, half-naked bodies surged from door to door in fierce haste to find a practicable entrance. Before retiring into the zenana Harichand had had all the doors in the other wings barricaded, but these, being less substantial, obtained the first attention of the mob. Even as he looked the door leading up into his own private apartments yielded, and a contingent of the rioters rushed, hoot-

ing, into the palace, shortly to make their presence still more terribly known by repeated blows on the door at the end of the corridor. Everywhere, mingling with the yells, the crash of falling glass and the splintering of wood testified to the thoroughness of their intentions. What they could not take they meant to break.

Harichand leaped down from the port-hole and went in search of John Deacon. He found him at the end of the corridor, where the blows of those who had broken into the Rajah's wing were already resounding on the other side of the door. He was anxiously watching the quivering of the great iron-studded door, while the two Nubians, armed with swords, stood ready in case a breach should be effected.

“How long can we hold out?” asked Harichand.

“From twenty minutes to half-an-hour, I think,” was the reply, “and less if they bethink themselves of fire. That is my great dread—lest they should try to burn us out.”

“It has occurred to me too,” said Harichand. “Ah!” he exclaimed, as a fresh clamour rose in the rear of the palace, “that puts an end to the suggestion I was about to make—that, as a last resort, we might escape by the garden, and try to meet the rescue party. They have forestalled us, and our retreat is cut off. The *budmash* have climbed the walls, and are already attacking the garden entrance.”

John Deacon looked at his watch.

“Miss Temple has been gone an hour

and a half," he said. "The troops may be here any minute now. I do not think the palace will be fired till it has been looted."

"God speed those English soldiers," Harichand replied; and he returned along the corridor to the central room without having said what he meant to say. But, after a minute spent in trying to comfort Amy, he looked into the courtyard again, and saw a sight which caused him to run quickly back to John Deacon.

"They are bringing up a beam of the main gate to batter the zenana door, and a fellow with a lighted brand from the guard-room cook-house has just gone into my wing," he said. "Look here, my friend, this is what I want to ask you—would it be wrong, according to our religion, to

take life in order to save our own? I have not fired on them yet, because I was not sure, and I did not like to make you responsible.”

Even at that moment of intensity John Deacon could not but feel his heart warm to this earnest proselyte, who, in his zeal to keep all the tenets of a new faith, put aside his judgment to lean on a spiritual adviser. As a matter of fact, he had been wondering why the rusty matchlocks of the bodyguardsmen were silent, and why a sporting rifle, which Harichand had brought from his apartments, was lying idle on the table in the dining-room. He put his hand on the Rajah’s shoulder and replied—

“I am not given to disrespect, so you must forgive me this once for saying that you are a good fellow. Yes, it is your duty

to defend yourself and those with you, in a righteous cause, by every means in your power."

Harichand needed no second bidding. Calling to the matchlockmen, who had hitherto stood waiting, he posted them in the small front rooms with orders to fire on the mob as fast as their antiquated pieces would permit. Then, taking his own more efficient weapon, after a warning hint to Amy, he slipped in a cartridge and went to the window of the dining-room. As he did so the hammering on the corridor door suddenly ceased, and his first glance through the window told him the reason. Curls of smoke were wreathing up from his own apartments, and numbers of the rioters were streaming thence, showing that those who had been assailing the corridor door had

been compelled to leave lest they should be cut off by the fire kindled by their companions. A tall and lean Mahomedan *budmash*, carrying a smoking brand, was emerging from the Rajah's private door, to be acclaimed with shouts of applause by those who had remained outside, and as he had evidently been prominent in the work of destruction, Harichand singled him out as the first example. Resting his rifle on the window-frame he aimed straight for the bragging ruffian's heart, and sent the bullet home. Flinging the smouldering torch among his fellows, the incendiary fell limp and lifeless to the ground. Before the crowd quite realized what had happened, one of the matchlocks in the adjoining room went off with a mighty roar, and laid another of the rioters low.

That was really the supreme moment of the attack. It was only the turn of a hair whether the whole multitude did not gird up and run. Harichand, recognizing the importance of the crisis, and loth to take another life, perhaps needlessly, waited breathless for the result, and his heart sank as he saw that he had stayed his hand in vain. If the men killed had been Hindoos a general panic and stampede might have followed, but they were both Mahomedans, and, with the votaries of Islam, to die in defence of their own creed, or in an attack on another's, is to go straight to Paradise. After one brief movement of recoil among the sea of up-turned faces below, one of the co-religionists of the fallen rioters raised the cry of "Allah !" and dashed at the zenana door.

His action decided the rest, and with fierce cries of defiance the whole mob rushed after him, a score of dusky arms laid hold of the battering beam, and thundering blows told that the end was near.

Harichand fired another shot into the thick of the crowd, and without waiting to note the result went down-stairs to the assailed door, whither John Deacon had already preceded him. Here also were gathered together the remainder of the matchlockmen, the two Nubians, and the male servants who had been freed from duty elsewhere by the concentration of the attack. Julloo too had been summoned from the garden entrance to take part in what promised to be the last stand. In the distance a knot of frightened females clustered weeping round the room where

the sick girl Jadeh lay. Harichand pressed forward to examine the door, which shook ominously under each stroke of the battering-ram, and then they all waited, looking each in the face of the other, but saying no word because of the din that drowned their voices.

In the meanwhile Amy, left alone overhead to her prayers and to the company of the wounded water-carrier, suddenly became aware of groans and shrieks proceeding from the other side of the corridor door. The Rajah's wing was now well alight, as the crackling of the flames and the clouds of smoke informed her only too surely, and the horror of knowing that any one on the other side of the door was doomed to a dreadful death diverted her attention from her own peril. One of the

rioters had clearly been cut off from retreat in the burning wing. Amy was on the point of going to the stair-head to implore her husband to come and admit the shrieking wretch, when a still more piercing scream reached her astonished ears. The cries were in English.

“Let me in! For the love of God let me in, or it will be too late. The fire is on me!”

Changing her mind, and running to the door herself, Amy raised her voice to its highest pitch, and called to know who was there.

“An Englishman, and alone,” came back the answer. “I swear I am alone and helpless. Open to me, for God’s sake, or I shall be burned to death.”

Without stopping to question the wis-

dom of her action Amy threw herself upon the heavy bars, and after a hard struggle contrived to pull back the massive door. Lying on the threshold within a few feet of the advancing flames, fast suffocating in the deadly smoke, and with blood pouring from his mouth, was a human figure whose singed garments proclaimed him a Mahomedan fakir. Amy's first impulse in the horror of the terrible sight was to reclose the door, but womanly pity prevailed. Putting forth all her strength she managed to pull the man into the corridor, and to shoot the bolts again.

"Are you really an Englishman?" she asked of the quivering heap on the floor, but Gilroy failed to answer.

The time spent in undoing the bars had well-nigh finished him, and he could only

point to his choking throat. Running to the central room for water, Amy heard a tremendous shock on the door below, followed by Harichand's voice calling to his men to stand ready, for the next blow would be the last. With a prayer on her lips, but still bent on mercy, she snatched a glass of water and hurried back to the corridor.

“ Yes,” said Gilroy, when he had taken a long draught ; “ I am an Englishman. I have burst a blood-vessel in my chest, and shall soon be nothing, but that is no matter. I would do you a service in return for your saving me from the flames. You received an anonymous letter some time back, which has probably caused you some trouble. I wrote that letter at the instigation of Govindjee the Dewan. His object was to try and part you from your husband.

He had been wanting to find some one who could write English, when chance threw me, starving, in his way. He bribed me with food and lodgings to do his dirty work, just as he bribed me to incite the attack on the palace that!" and, in his ex-
rise—"that is the tran-
I will wager all I'm worth to be all right now."

Amy heard nothing but the roar of the mob, but she flew to a window, and saw that Gilroy's accustomed ears had not deceived him. Through the archway, marching fours deep, came a company of the 110th Fusiliers, with Cyprian Hammersly at their head, and almost before she could realize her deliverance a quick word of command brought the men into line at the

end of the courtyard. Hammersly appeared to shout to the rioters, but they were much too busy to hear or heed. So, with a single flash in the sunlight, up came the long line of shining barrels to the “ present,” and Amy, shrinking back from what she knew must come, heard the lieutenant’s voice—this time distinctly audible above the turmoil—ring out in the hoarse command, “ Aim low, Fusiliers ! ”

The words had scarcely left his lips when the battering beam crashed upon the zenana door, there was a confused rush at the foot of the stairs, and then in one clean report the volley rang out, and the rioters turned to flee. Hammersly put no obstacle in the way of the stampede, but, quickly re-forming his men to the right and left, kept the archway clear ; so that Amy, venturing to

the window again, saw two lines of soldiers on each side of the courtyard, and between them a terror-stricken crowd making helter-skelter for the gate. The *Doorga* riot at Jhalwa was over.

Not quite all its consequences, though. The fire was gaining ground in the other wing, threatening every minute to break through into the corridor, and Amy, anxious for the removal of the two injured men, went down the stairs with an unformed dread in her mind, lest something had occurred to keep her husband from her. The sight she saw at the foot will haunt her for many a year. The door, battered from its hinges by the last blow of the beam, hung half open, and just inside it was a little silent group having John Deacon as its centre—John Deacon supported in

the arms of Julloo the blacksmith, while Harichand vainly tried to staunch a bullet-wound in his side.

“ He has given his life for mine,” the Rajah said, as Amy bent over ; but the wounded man could only smile.

CHAPTER XV.

DEATH'S BRIGHT ANGEL.

THE Jhalwa riot was two days old, and John Deacon still lingered on in the room which was hastily prepared for him as soon as it was seen that the soldiers' efforts had beaten back the fire from the zenana wing. The military surgeon, who came up with the main body of troops a few minutes after Hammersly's advance company had quelled the riot, gave no hope, and Laura Temple, who tended the stricken man night and day, gave no hope; and yet even now Harichand and Amy could not realize that

their friend was to be taken from them. After loving hands had borne him upwards he regained the power of speech, and now that those who knew best knew that it would make no difference, he was allowed to converse to his happy heart's content.

For if ever a man was glad to die, that man was he who had sprung forward to intercept a *budmash* knife aimed at the Rajah's breast, at the same moment that a soldier's bullet chanced through the just opened door. Whether or no John Deacon's fault was as great as he himself considered it, those who read this simple story of a good man's temptation must judge, but his whole feeling was one of thankfulness to God, who had thus permitted him to give his own life for that of him whom he had been so nearly incited

to injure. Twenty times a day he joyed to know that the ball which pierced his side must otherwise have inevitably laid the Rajah low.

“Not that I trust to my own poor atonement,” he said over and over again to Harichand. “It will be a greater than mine that will save me from the consequences of my sin, but punishment was bound to come—and better here than yonder.”

Bitter indeed was Cyprian Hammersly's grief at discovering that the fatal bullet had been due to his sudden order to the men to depress the muzzles of their rifles, but the circumstances were such as to exonerate him from all blame. He had previously given orders to fire the first volley over the heads of the rioters, hoping that they would desist without further blood-

shed ; but just as the soldiers' fingers were already pressing trigger he caught sight of Amy's face at the upper window, and fearing that she would be hit he shouted the command to aim low. He was also moved to change his original intention by seeing that the door was likely to give way at the next blow, and that at all hazards it was his duty to stop the rioters from entering the palace.

Gilroy's dead body was found at the spot where Amy had left him, and Hari-chand was not surprised to hear the additional proof of Govindjee's duplicity as furnished by the dying loafer's statement. Steps were immediately taken to secure the Dewan's arrest, the task being committed to Hammersly, who, at the Rajah's request, and by his colonel's permission, was left

behind with his company for a few days till the city should be thoroughly tranquil. The main part of his duty was light, for when the populace came trooping back at sundown from the ceremonies, so indignant were they that the *budmash* remained discreetly in hiding. Many of the most notorious ringleaders sneaked out of the city never to return, and the Rajah's body-guard—now come back to duty—with the help of the British soldiers, captured most of the liberated prisoners. These were lodged in an old Rajput fort till the jail should be rebuilt.

But so, far the wily Dewan had escaped capture. Both Hammersly and the native commandant of the bodyguard, who had entered heart and soul into the chase, were at their wits' end to discover his hiding-

place, yet without result. It was known that Govindjee had waited in his own house on the day of the *Doorga*, but on that abode of mystery being promptly ransacked by the Fusiliers he was found to have flown, and every subsequent effort to unearth him had failed. This was the more surprising, as the presence of the British troops in Jhalwa was acting like a tonic on the loyalty of the inhabitants, and there was hardly a man in the city who would not have given the Dewan up. Even his old friend the Kotwal was indefatigable in the search, so that at last it began to be rumoured that the arch-traitor had managed to escape from the city in disguise.

On the morning of the third day Cyprian Hammersly, before starting out on what bade fair to be a fruitless errand, came, as

was his wont in those sad days, to spend a few minutes by John Deacon's bedside. On his entering the room the dying man greeted him with his old kindly smile, but with a nod implying that he should wait, went on questioning the faithful Julloo, who hardly ever left his beloved pastor's side.

"But, dear Julloo," he was saying, "surely this talk is foolishness. You say that I have preached myself to death with one of my own sermons. How can that be?"

"It was like this, Sahib," replied the blacksmith, earnestly; "you remember the beautiful words you said about the grain of mustard-seed—on that last Sabbath I was at the Mission—and how I waited to question you after? How I told you that I was trying to plant the seed in a man of stony heart?"

“I remember it well,” said John Deacon. “That day was a milestone of trouble in the records of the Mission, seeing that thenceforward I was to miss you so sorely. But how could what I said have brought all this to pass?”

“Sahib,” proceeded Julloo, “Govindjee the Dewan was the man in whose heart I tried to sow that seed. On the evening of the day when he was at the palace with the Thakore of Dhoonghar, he sent for me on the pretence of giving me work to do. In truth I found that he wanted to put a lie in my mouth, and make me swear that I had changed a child’s bangle many years since—an affair with which I had no concern. Sahib, when I had refused to take his bribe and to tell his lies I should have informed you, and then all this wickedness

could have been prevented. But not knowing till to-day that this lie was matter of great moment affecting the Ranee, and being puffed up with the pride of my own sinful heart, I kept silence, thinking that by sowing the seed I could peradventure turn the Dewan from his evil ways. Thus when I went back he had me cast into prison on a false charge, knowing that thereby he would prevent me from disclosing what I should have disclosed at first."

John Deacon, with all his reverent trust in one great Guiding Hand, could not but wonder at Julloo's words, so plainly did they make manifest the method by which God had led these His servants along the thorny road. There flooded back into his mind the memory of that sultry Sabbath

morning in the dingy mission-room, when, fresh from the palace, and with the influence of Harichand's first softening full upon him, he had poured forth his heart to his simple hearers in fervent words which he now knew were not his own. And this, the simplest and best of them all, had gone straightway forth to obey that inspired mandate in such fashion that it formed a link in the silver chain that lay among the brambles. For it was very certain that the doubt on Amy's marriage would have been swept away at once if Julloo, when he had the chance, had disclosed the lie Govindjee wanted him to tell. How, then, would it have been with Harichand's conversion? What of his own chastening? "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;" and perhaps the greatest comfort that fell to John

Deacon on the brink of the dark valley was this plain evidence that his chastening came down from Heaven in love.

He put forth his wasting hand and touched the blacksmith's brown palm.

"Fear not, Julloo," he said; "you have done no wrong. You had a perfect right to carry on God's work in the way which to you seemed best. He has been leading us all, these months past—and who am I that I should be told this and that? I feared when I saw you in court that there was treachery behind the charge. The Kotwal seemed only to do Govindjee's bidding."

"Ah, Sahib," replied Julloo, "I am not the first poor man they have put away together. It has long been a saying in the bazaars that the Kotwal is but Govindjee

in another skin. The people say that Narayen is in the Dewan's power, and dare not wink an eyelid without him."

In these few words was added the final touch that was needed to make the tragedy of Jhalwa complete. So pregnant with meaning were they to Hammersly, quietly waiting his turn at the bedside, that he tightened his belts and instinctively slipped from the room. In the courtyard he found his colour-sergeant with the twenty picked men who had been told-off to assist in the search that day. Taking one of the native bodyguard as a guide, he put himself at the head of his party, and marched them by a roundabout route to the house of Narayen Futteelall, the Kotwal. Having arranged his programme with the sergeant as he went along, he lost no time in carry-

ing it out. After the house had been quietly surrounded, Hammersly and a few of his Fusiliers entered without ceremony, and discovered the Dewan in a rice-bin in an outhouse. When Govindjee had been hauled out, all powdery white, from his hiding-place, the lieutenant also annexed the person of the Kotwal on the charge of harbouring a notorious offender, and started back with his prisoners for the palace. And to this day there are many in Jhalwa who will tell you with glee of the stern-faced young Sahib, who drove their two corrupt oppressors before him through the public streets, and hastened their lagging gait with the point of his drawn sword—for all the world as though they had been swine.

The Rajah chanced to be in the court-

yard when the little procession arrived. The power of life and death is in the hands of the ruler of a native independent State, and a month previously the fate which the trembling Govindjee evidently expected would most assuredly have been meted out to him. But to-day, despite his burned palace and his dying friend, there was a great fount of thankfulness in Harichand's heart, and thankfulness is mercy's own twin-sister. When he had heard the testimony of Julloo and that of Rati Ram and Jadeh—the two latter being nearly recovered—he fined Govindjee heavily, and sent him into penal servitude for ten years. Narayen Futteelall, the Kotwal, got off with a much shorter term, but not so short that he did not have to join his fellow-convict and former co-traitor in many works

of practical utility. Perhaps what is spuriously called "the irony of fate" was never so strangely asserted as when, later on, these two had to pile with their own pampered hands the stones of the Christian church which Harichand afterwards built in Jhalwa.

And now, my readers, if there be any among you who set store by harrowing death-bed scenes, and who are looking for such in these last pages, truth compels me to send you empty away. Come with me by all means, if you will, and stand by John Deacon's side as he puts out into the mists beyond the bar—mists for you and me yet a little longer, but for him so soon to clear before his Pilot's mast-head light. Witness with me the sadness of farewell among the loving and beloved ones left behind, but

expect no repining from him whose clear call had come. Rather will you see the joy unspeakable of faith confirmed, the triumph of a double victory won, and the satisfied longing of a tired warrior for eternal rest—for,

“ Love masters agony ; the soul that seemed
Forsaken, feels her present God again,
And in her Father's arms
Contented dies away.”

It was at nightfall on the day of Govind-jee's capture that the end came, very peacefully and quietly, in one of the quaint rooms in the zenana wing. Harichand and Amy, Laura Temple and Cyprian Hammersly, Julloo and the two native readers, were gathered around ; while in the courtyard a little band of those who had held Wadia's Gully so well, waited among the blackened ruins for the news

they had been gently told must come. Last words were many, but they were rather of the future than the past, for the dying man kept all his faculties, and was full of hopeful care for the prospects of the Mission. It was not till he had arranged everything to his satisfaction, forgetting nothing that could affect the welfare of his humblest convert, and leaving no word unsaid which might smooth the path of his successor, that he turned on his side and whispered to Harichand—

“ So I shall be the first occupant of your Christian cemetery. Thank God for that ! If He had not stood by me it might have had a worthier tenant.”

“ Hush ! ” whispered the Rajah, bending over him. “ What more can a man do than give his life for his friend ? ”

And the happy smile that lit John Deacon's paling features was at once his reply and his farewell, for so he passed away.

Thus by events culminating in the death of its founder was the way cleared for the prosperity which has since been vouchsafed to the Jhalwa Mission. Harichand has nobly fulfilled the resolutions he formed in the garden, and, with Amy at his side, is ever busy in good works for a people which is learning daily to fear him less and respect him more. The capricious tide of fashion at the cantonments turned towards the Rajah and Ranee after the romance of the riot, and they could have had their pick of numberless smart friends, but husband and wife are too fully occupied to care for society. Besides the few who

take an interest in their life's work, Laura Temple and Cyprian Hammersly are the only European visitors at the palace. Harichand and Amy are both beginning to think that the young man's devotion will have its reward sooner or later, for the influence of John Deacon has wrought that change in him for which those who know Laura best believe her to be waiting. In the meanwhile she is making strenuous use of her *entrée* into the zenanas to persuade the people against infant marriages—a work in which she is ably backed by Julloo, who is now a reader at the Mission. Amy too, recognizing that the story concocted by Govindjee as to Luxmeebhai's survival, though false in her case, was not beyond the bounds of possibility, is taking steps, with Harichand's full approval, to

warn English girls against similar pitfalls. It is to be hoped that her endeavours will keep Indian suitors at arm's length till their antecedents have been made as clear as noonday.

But it is in the church and schools, new mission-room and hospital, that Harichand and Amy are chiefly bound up ; for in doing all to the glory of God they feel that there especially they are renewing the memory of him to whom they owe their peace. John Deacon's successor is their constant friend and companion, and though he can never fill the void in their hearts, they rejoice with him in his successes, and grieve with him in his failures, ever ready with helpful sympathy, and holding no toil wearisome that may win one soul to Christ. Many sins are there, and much of sorrow,

in Jhalwa still, but in all its teeming alleys and bazaars, it is no longer accounted shame to be called Christian. The city is growing fast in the grace which John Deacon planted, and there is hope that in years to come all its dark places will glow in the light that first shimmered feebly forth from the upper chamber in the Gully—even the “light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

THE END.

